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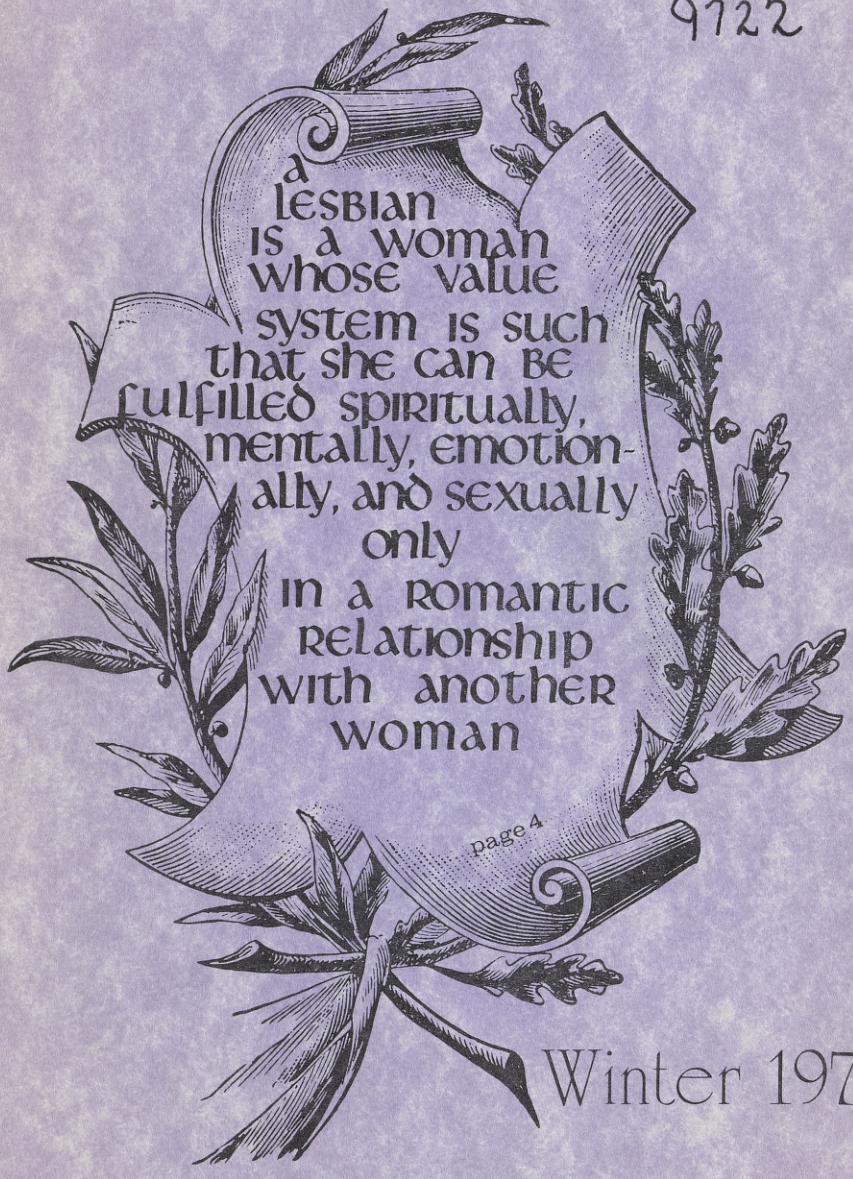

Winter 1975/76

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All views expressed in this publication are the ideas and opinions of the individual contributor and do not necessarily reflect the position of LESBIAN VOICES or the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance. We welcome differing points of view on controversial issues, but request that material be expressed clearly and in a tone and style compatible with LESBIAN VOICES. LESBIAN VOICES attempts to present a dignified format and a positive and constructive sense of life, in keeping with our belief that lesbians and lesbianism can be good, wholesome, fulfilling, and joyful. We reject the view of lesbianism as material for pornography, religious censure, or psychiatric study -- all of which treat lesbianism as sinful or deviant.

Contributors, please enclose a stamped envelope if material is to be returned, and please specify your choice of by-line. (We don't want to slip up and publish the name of someone who prefers to remain anonymous!) Contributors will receive five free copies of issue in which work appears. Deadline for the March issue is February 1st.

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We are
coming
And our name
is legion
You dare not
disown us

P. North

ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

It's been a year now since we threw together the first issue of LESBIAN VOICES and rushed off to the printer with it -- all twenty-eight pages. By our fourth issue in September 1975, we had expanded to sixty pages, were doing halftones, and printing the magazine ourselves. Whew, what a year! And International Women's Year, too!

This is a good time to stop to thank some of the people who have made LESBIAN VOICES possible. First of all, we wish to thank Debbie Smith and Fran Perea for founding *SISTERS OF SAPPHA* and our predecessor SATIN two years ago; and we thank *SISTERS OF SAPPHA* [now called Lesbian-Feminist Alliance] for acting as a support group and individual Sisters for carrying LESBIAN VOICES out to women's fairs and Gay Pride Day and generally publicizing the magazine. Next, we wish to thank the many feminist publications that agreed to exchange subscriptions and advertising with us and offered us encouragement in getting started. We thank Laurel of AMAZON QUARTERLY for her article "How To Make a Magazine" which contained much useful information. A great deal of appreciation goes to our many contributors who have filled our pages with poetry, art, and ideas. A special thanks goes to our loyal advertisers, whose patronage helps support our magazine, and we thank our many retailers and distributors for getting the magazine out where women can find it. Finally, we thank our individual readers and subscribers, for their enjoyment of our efforts gives us the energy to do more. And, most of all, we thank our Fairy Godmother: We never could have done it so soon or so well without you, Fairy Godmother!

International Women's Year is drawing to a close now, and we are entering the last quarter of our century. 1976 brings us the Bicentennial of the United States. All this makes us very aware of time and history. I feel sure that we are living now in a period which will be of great interest to future historians -- particularly lesbian historians. We have seen great changes in the past five, ten, or twenty years. What changes are yet to come? Will we have legal marriages next year? Will "post-Christian feminism" become the culturally dominant ideology of American women? Will we have our own communities and economic base by the year 2000? Who knows?

Speculating about future history reminds us to look back to see where we have been -- but when we do, we become aware of how little we know about our history -- as women and as lesbians. As women, our history has been largely ignored, considered trivial and unworthy of serious study. As lesbians, we find that our history has often been suppressed, to the extent that our very existence has been ignored, denied, and censored. How often have we read of pronouns being changed in the works of lesbian poets after their death, or of letters and personal papers being burned by concerned (heterosexual) family members to "protect" an author's reputation from "tarnishment"! And we have no way of knowing in how many cases such "protection" was successful in destroying all evidence of some eminent woman's lesbianism. Lesbians apparently have existed throughout history and probably in the same numbers as now; yet, thumbing through Kraft-Ebbing or reading of witches' trials, we get only a glimpse here and there of some notorious and courageous outcast.

With the United States Bicentennial bearing down upon us, the patriotism, the nostalgia, the armchair history, and the sentimentality will no doubt reach a peak by July 4th. Since we can't stop the Bicentennial, LESBIAN VOICES thinks we ought to join it -- with a celebration of our own lesbian history. We would like to solicit material dealing with lesbians or single women from prehistorical North America up to the early 20th century. How did lesbian Indians live? What is known about black lesbians during and after the slave period? How did single women fare in the frontier? Were there any lesbians among that first shipload of women who were hauled over in 1609? We would be interested in anything and everything dealing with lesbians/single women in United States history. And to launch our celebration, we have in this issue (beginning on page 41) Judith Schwarz's paper on Old Maids in early 19th century America.

Defining Lesbianism

by Rosalie Nichols

Over past months, I have become aware of a controversy in the lesbian-feminist movement over the question of who is or is not a lesbian (or as some put it, realesbian). This question has been brought into focus by the sudden popularity of lesbianism as an alternative to oppressive heterosexual relations and by the emergence of lesbianism as a political position in the struggle against sexism. Specifically, the question has arisen because of the existence of bisexuals and political lesbians (women who are not lesbians but call themselves lesbians for political reasons) in the feminist and lesbian-feminist movements.

Well do I remember the antagonism of "old gays" in Sacramento toward a political lesbian who was giving talks on lesbianism to college classes and other groups. The reason for their antagonism was that this woman had never lived as a lesbian, never had a lesbian relationship, never gone through the years of oppression that the "old gays" had, and therefore, they concluded, was not qualified to present the lesbian point of view to an ignorant public.

Political lesbians and women who became lesbians through the feminist movement, on the other hand, were often antagonistic toward "old gays" on other grounds. Old gays, they claimed, were heavily into heterosexual models and stereotyped ways of behaving -- in other words, "butch and femme" relationships, monogamy, domesticity, materialism, and so forth. Old gays, said the nouveaux lesbians, lacked a feminist and/or revolutionary consciousness. Old cherished institutions such as the gay bar and Daughters of Bilitis (the only two places to go twenty years ago) were heavily criticized by the younger neo-lesbians who had never been there. Gays who stayed in the closet were viewed with scorn.

Adding to this mutual animosity were the experiences of realesbians who were seduced into relationships with bisexual women or political lesbians only to find themselves playing second fiddle to some man. Often the men, in such cases, encouraged the "lesbian" relationships for voyeuristic purposes of their own, or in hopes of a menage a trois. Straight feminists, on the other hand, have sometimes complained that lesbians made unwelcome passes at them or tried to "guilt trip" them into bed. Some realesbians hid behind the "bisexual" label because they felt it was more acceptable to society; and some bisexuals, so it turns out, have hid behind the "lesbian" label because they felt it was more acceptable to radicals. And so on and so on. All very confusing.

But don't feel bad! We're not the first movement to have gone through something like this! It's all part of the growing pains that accompany social change! As an old-timer in another movement -- the American Indian movement -- I can see a lot of parallels. People denying their Indian blood to avoid discrimination. Later, people (usually blonde, blue-eyed) proclaiming their pride in their (almost always) Cherokee blood. Fights over who is an Indian. Are you full-blood? Do you speak your language? (Hell, no, a hundred years ago we were forbidden to speak our languages, remember?) Only reservation Indians are real Indians. Reservation Indians have to have a separate organization. He's a BIA Indian. Yeah, a real Uncle Tomahawk. A red apple -- red on the outside, white on the inside. What do you mean, look at history "objectively" -- you've been influenced by your white professors! (Don't you think that an <u>objective</u> view of history would show that justice is on <u>our</u> side?) See what I mean?

Often there are good reasons to call for "credentials." Remember the Boston Tea Party? What did the whites dress up as? Indians, of course -- let the "Redskins" take the blame! A white ploy in frontier times was to dress up as Indians to commit some atrocity as an excuse to go in and "clean the Redskins out." Another ploy has been to

get a group of white "Indians" to agree to some government plan that realindians would never willingly accept. For example, "Indian" enrollment was re-opened in California during the settlement of land claims, with the effect that those of less blood (usually neo-Indians) could outvote and reap the benefits from realindians who voted against settlement and, in some cases (such as the Pit River people), actually sent government settlement checks back by return mail. So, calling for credentials isn't all paranoia and one-up[wo]man-ship, but can reflect the genuine concern of long-oppressed peoples to make sure that their legitimate interests and attitudes are accurately represented.

On the other hand, what is sometimes wrong with calling for credentials is that it can be insulting, patronizing, and hurt people's feelings. (It threw me for a loop the first time someone implied that I was not a realindian. So far, no one has ever accused me of not being a realesbian. Though, as lesbians, we have often been accused of not being "real women.") Credentialism can also lead to playing "more radical than thou," much as Christians play "holier than thou" -- with the same negative results.

With this introduction, then, let us consider the definition I propose, which appears on the cover of this magazine:

> A LESBIAN is a WOMAN whose VALUE SYSTEM is such that she can be FULFILLED spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually ONLY in a ROMANTIC relationship with another woman.

Who is included and who left out by this definition?

First of all, a lesbian is a WOMAN. This leaves out men. Even castrated men. Sorry, but in my opinion, having a sex-change operation does not give a man the feelings, experiences, attitudes, sensitivities, etc. of a woman, even though he may be very effeminate, gentle, and sensitive in his own way. A possible exception or middle-ground: those hermaphrodites who have female biological characteristics and have been raised as girls and who seek "sex change" merely to eliminate unwanted male characteristics. My feeling in general, however, is that transexuals and hermaphrodites should form their own (badly needed) organizations to deal with their unique problems, and I would support them in such an effort. I would especially support them in their right to be hermaphrodites and not to be forced to choose between the categories of male and female simply because the majority of people fall in one or the other category.

Next, the emphasis on VALUE SYSTEM is necessary for several reasons. One is that, as many other lesbians have said, we are tired of being defined by our sexuality or sexual behavior. Having sexual relations with another woman does not make a woman a lesbian. On the contrary, it is the underlying value system (whether conscious or not) that makes a lesbian fall in love and want sexual fulfillment with another woman. Our value systems are formed at a very early age -- I would say by age four or five. This leads lesbians to believe that they were "born that way." Because basic value systems (especially if unconscious) are hard to change, lesbians are led to feel that they have "no choice in the matter" (to quote the United Sisters position paper "An Attempt at Defining Lesbianism" -- available for 25¢ from U.S., P. O. Box 41, Garwood, NJ 07027). This is not strictly true -- lesbians do choose to be lesbians, even if unconsciously -- and value systems can be changed, but only by getting down to very basic premises which were formed at an early age, making them conscious, examining them, and deciding whether they are valid or not. I am not, of course, suggesting that lesbians should change their value system. I do think that we should become conscious of our values as much as possible, so that we do not get hung up in contradictions or leave ourselves vulnerable to attack by psychiatrists, ministers, social workers, and other cultural agents of the straight society. Incidentally, it follows from the above that heterosexuals are not "born that way" either; Mother Nature didn't decree it, heterosexuals chose it, just as we chose lesbianism; so it is every bit as appropriate to ask heterosexuals to explain their heterosexuality as it is for them to ask us what "causes" our lesbianism.

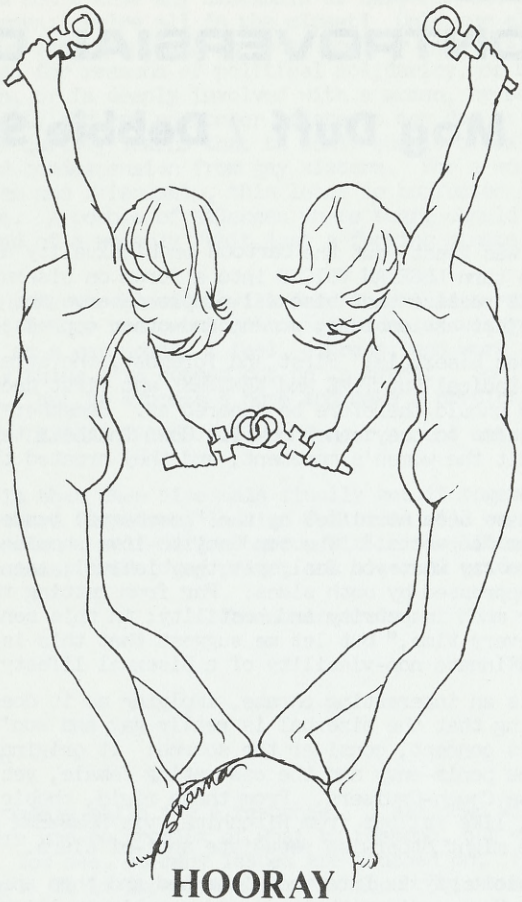
Moving on in our definition to "can be FULFILLED," whom does this include and exclude? The emphasis on FULFILLMENT is meant to draw a distinction between what people do (for one reason or another) and what is really satisfying to them. Contrary to the belief of the typical straight male ("One good screw will straighten 'em out!"), the vast majority of lesbians have had heterosexual relations at one time or another or during some period of their lives -- and found they were not satisfied. Many lesbians throughout history have been married and raised children, yet still turned to another woman for fulfillment of romantic desires. Even when a lesbian has been able to achieve orgasm with some knowledgeable and considerate male, she still feels unfulfilled emotionally and spiritually. Conversely, our definition would exclude those women who are able to have "good sex" with another woman but who seek emotional fulfillment elsewhere. Our defintion also has the advantage of <u>including</u> those lesbians who, for one reason or another, never actually find the fulfillment they desire -- whether they choose to remain celibate (from guilt or because of religious convictions, etc.) or whether they simply fail to find the partner who can fulfill them (as in the case of having a series of unhappy lesbian relationships), the fact remains that they <u>can</u> be fulfilled only with a woman.

The phrase "spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually" was inserted to emphasize the various levels or areas in which fulfillment is desired and required -- again, to counteract the sexual stereotype -- also to indicate the totality of the lesbian as a human being and to emphasize the totality of the lesbian relationship.

The word "ONLY" is included for obvious reasons: it is intended to draw a distinction between lesbians and bisexual women. A bisexual woman, so I am told, can be fulfilled by either sex and makes no distinction in her romantic feelings between men and women -- or, in the case of one bisexual woman I met, she recognizes the differences between men and women, but enjoys the unique attributes of each sex. A lesbian wants a woman for fulfillment, and that's that. She may or may not be a "man-hater." She may be friendly to men, she may be indifferent to them, she may feel repulsed by them -- but she does not feel fulfilled by them. In my opinion, understandable as it may be, a bisexual woman should not call herself a lesbian; too many misunderstandings and painful situations can and do result. A bisexual woman should call herself bisexual.

Finally, the last phrase of our definition "in a ROMANTIC relationship with another woman" -- why is it necessary to emphasize "romantic"? Well, Jill Johnston said "all women are lesbians" -- after all, we love ourselves, don't we? And women who masturbate have come to regard that as a lesbian experience, so I'm told. And much of the warmth and sisterly affection in the feminist movement has come to be described as "lesbian," even when the only touching is on the spiritual level (and <u>not</u> the mental, emotional, and sexual levels). It seems to me that the word "lesbian" is in danger of losing all meaning. So I feel it necessary to reaffirm that lesbianism is a <u>romantic</u> relationship with another woman and not merely sisterly affection or self-love. The word "romantic" -- in addition to referring to "a love affair" -- also refers to the pursuit of values, which directs our attention back to the importance of value systems in our definition. If love is an expression of our highest values, then it is a betrayal of those values to define lesbianism as something less than romantic.

I was very tempted, when formulating this definition, to write "in a romantic relationship with another <u>lesbian</u>." I would have liked to have written it that way because I don't believe that a lesbian can be happy and fulfilled with a straight woman or a bisexual woman. Since her love is based on values, she needs someone who shares and affirms those values. But the rules of definitions state that one may not use the word being defined within the definition itself, so I didn't. Pretend I did, anyway!



HOORAY
by Carolyn Shama

Hooray for us. We are women! Complete women, without a need for men in a world of men. We love each other, all of each other. We laugh and cry, despair, fight, work and commune together. We make love to each other, all in a tangle of arms, legs and sweet fragrant body odors. Wet with love, we sleep in one another's arms, in sheer exhaustion.

Hooray for us. We are free! We know the freedom we have is not a gentle freedom. We must be careful; but when we are with those who care, we don't have to be full of bravado and bullshit. We can relax, and be gay, because the others of us share our love and understand.

Hooray for me. I am a woman! I rejoice in me. I love my body, my mind. I love beautiful things. I touch soft flowers with my fingers, read lovely poetry with my eyes, and delight in the sensuous caresses I share with the woman I love.

THE CASE OF THE CONTROVERSIAL CARTOON

by Mog Duff / Debbie Smith

Dear LESBIAN VOICES:

Last issue was great, but the cartoon on bisexuality disturbed me. In writing this, I don't mean to turn LESBIAN VOICES into a forum on bisexuality; lesbians who stop to think a moment will realize that bisexual people deserve the right to self-definition and self-description just as lesbians, women, and other oppressed groups do.

Who oppresses bisexuals? First and foremost, the straight media. It wasn't your local drugstore radical but TIME and NEWSWEEK who first decided bisexuality was getting "popular" and should therefore be sneered at. Remember how they operate: they set you up in their terms so they can knock you down in their terms. They created the bra-burner to discredit the women's movement, and they created the sexual dilettante to discredit bisexuals.

Straights have been horrified by the "homosexual tendencies" of the bisexual, and now gays scorn the "cop-outs." The tendency to love shouldn't horrify anybody, and it is not a cop-out to say what you feel; yet the bisexual, seen as a threat to both sides, is routinely oppressed by both sides. Far from getting the best of both worlds, she is the target for much insecurity and hostility; in this sense, bisexuality will indeed "trip you up every time," but let me suggest that this is due to societal pressures rather than any innate non-viability of a bisexual lifestyle.

"Cop-out" is an interesting phrase, implying as it does that bisexuality doesn't exist -- the idea being that the bisexual is really gay and won't admit it. Before you put your faith in this concept, consider the source: it originated with those wonderful people who brought you penis-envy and the castrating female, yes, none other than Sigmund Freud and his Viennese Couch-Cruisers. From those rigid, phobic males the theory is still filtering down, like fallout from Hiroshima, via NEWSWEEK and TIME, to infect the guiltless sisters who might otherwise repudiate anti-bi slurs.

Do bi's exploit gays? Lure them into bed and then abandon them to run back to the opposite sex? More media mythology, and peculiarly illogical.

First, it assumes that gays are both stupid and oversexed, unable to resist the cunning bi (or else it assumes that bisexuals are so overwhelmingly attractive and brilliant as to be irresistible).

Second, it assumes that bisexuals really like the opposite sex better. Straights might like to believe this and gays, if their confidence has been undermined, might be afraid it is true. But bisexuals by definition are attracted to both sexes; where there is a preference, it is as likely to be on the side of same-sex relations as opposite-sex relations, despite the fact that society supports the latter with such institutions as marriage.

Third, it assumes that bisexuals must be polygamous. There is an unstated belief that bisexuals must have both sexes merely because they are capable of being attracted to either sex. This is really quite silly. The bisexual, like anyone else, may ally herself with a single individual in a long-term monogamous commitment. Or she may not. Her lifestyle evolves from her individual personality, not her sexual orientation.

The fourth and central assumption is of course that bisexuals are scheming, selfish, depraved (but irresistible) people who enjoy nothing more than injuring those foolish enough to relate to them. Maybe you know a bisexual who fits that description. I doubt it, but if you do, is it fair to judge an entire group by the actions of one

individual?

Chances are, you don't know any bisexuals at all, for the same reason that straights don't know any gays: we're all in the closet! Only our closets have two doors, an outer one for the straights, and an inner one for gays. A bisexual woman may identify herself as lesbian for reasons of political solidarity, or because she is principally attracted to women, or is deeply involved with a woman, or because she finds that socially and emotionally she can no longer relate to men due to their sexism. But another reason is that she quickly learns that to admit she is bisexual is to leave herself open to criticism and condescension from gay sisters. For a woman who has nowhere else to turn for acceptance and friendship, this leads to confusion and/or the closet. I know. It happened to me. A couple of silences where there should have been arguments, a weak "Oh really?" instead of a womanly "Wait just a fucking minute!" and presto: instant closet.

I don't think anyone who knows me will describe me as a ravening fiend exploiting unsuspecting lesbians; I hope they wouldn't describe me as wishywashy about feminism or lesbian pride. I live as a gay woman, I feel, express, and work for gay pride, I call myself gay. The only thing I've copped out on is myself. So I dare to write this, not to ask for "tolerance," but to express a hope and make a prediction.

The hope is that LESBIAN VOICES will no longer accept material derogatory to bisexuals.

The prediction is that when bisexuals finally get it together enough to come out of our closets and declare ourselves, lesbian feminists will be the first to extend us recognition as an autonomous, self-defined group within the liberation movement. And on that day, what with feminist pride, gay pride, and bisexual pride, I for one will be proud as hell!

Yours sincerely,

Mog Duff

REPLY FROM OUR CARTOONIST:

Your letter certainly calls for a response! I sat down with paper and pen and immediately found there was no problem of what to respond, but moreso -- which part of it to bring up first. You see, so many issues are touched on. Perhaps that is the core of my response anyway. It is impossible to talk about "bisexuality" as an isolated subject.

I am sure you do not say you are a bisexual or write long letters in response to one anti-bi cartoon because you take yourself lightly. I see intelligence and sincerity in your letter.

I too do not lightly say that I am a lesbian or write anti-bisexual material simply to test out my ink-level!

Instead of a play-by-play list of issues, let me first refer you to the name of the cartoon in question. It is called "Choices," and for a very definite reason.

You and I. . .all women I would hope. . .value themselves. To get on a more personal level, I value myself. I not only see a multitude of choices every day on this planet, but I make choices for myself. Some things I choose to say or do or be -- others I do not.

It all comes down to my own value system. I am a woman. I am a lesbian feminist. I am a separatist. I am a man-hater. All these are words but carry with them the

nitty-gritty decisions I make every day. For that matter, I'm an atheist and an individualist, too.

Whom do I love? Whom do I hate? Where do I spend my energy? My time? Who and what is fulfilling to me? What is "good" to do? To be?

All this may sound general, but if you've got $2 in your pocket, where will you spend it? And who will benefit? The same goes for emotional energy -- and more.

It all means one thing. Your letter and my cartoon are tangible physical results of two different value systems. You value bisexuality. I do not. I value lesbianism. You say you do also. They are, however, two different ways to be. Yes, be. . . not say or do or call. . .two very different value systems totally.

There is, of course, the whole side issue of "different kinds of bisexuals." The same phrase could be used for lesbians. I don't buy either one. Better to just say that many women haven't made any conscious choices for themselves yet or are in a period of consciousness raising and learning about themselves. . .i.e., a transition period.

So let's get down to basics (with women who have chosen).

The cover of this issue has a definition of a lesbian. It's a good one: "A lesbian is a woman whose value system is such that she can be fulfilled spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and sexually only in a romantic relationship with another woman." It is also in a magazine called LESBIAN VOICES. It is totally inconceivable to me (not to mention inconsistent, at the very least) that a woman could say, "I am a lesbian," then turn around and spend her woman-spirit, time and energy on and with a man! Why? That is the real question. Whom or what is being valued?

O.K. So. . . if a lifestyle is thoughtfully chosen of openness to both males and females. . . say you are bisexual, not lesbian, and do your thing. Don't talk of the right for "self-definition" and "self-description," then turn around and call yourself both bisexual and lesbian. The two are different!

As for your hope that LESBIAN VOICES won't print such "derogatory" material, it seems quite a natural place to find just such material. That particular cartoon came out of a personal experience over a year ago. . . the general issue still remains.

Are women men-oriented or women-oriented? You talk of closets and of possible reasons why bisexuals may call themselves lesbians. First of all, many closets are self-imposed. And who benefits? Yes, men do (again). Your reasons for self-defined lesbianism seem to me to be outer-oriented as opposed to a full all-encompassing inner-oriented choice: (1) For political solidarity. We've all seen, heard, or perhaps been the "political lesbian." I wonder what's to be gained by political proclamations -- newspaper editorials or gay pride speeches -- when they are all followed by woman spirit directed to men just as the papers leave the press! I'm sure men like the idea. "Say anything you want, just come to me when you're through with your meeting tonight." Where is the woman at who chooses this? How do we feel about Kate Millett? Or Robin Morgan? I feel betrayed and ripped off.

(2) "Because she is primarily attracted to women." What's the "primarily" business? Does a woman have "a certain spot or part of herself" saved to direct toward her second choice? Who wants a partial commitment? And the word "attracted" has sexual implications that I'm not sure of the intent. A sexual attraction does not make a committed relationship! Just the opposite!

(3) "Is deeply involved with a woman." Hopefully a woman defines herself first, then knowingly chooses to involve herself with a particular woman whose value system is compatible with her own. If so, she is a lesbian, then involves herself. An involvement does not define a woman! A woman, on the other hand, may not be involved with anyone at all, may be quite lonely even, and yet know inside herself that she is a lesbian. What is said of the same woman if she becomes involved with a man? She's heterosexual? Or relating to one or more males and females simultaneously? A bisexual? If that were the case, the logical end result would be: No one has to think, no one has

to ask, who am I? What do I want? Simply go by whom you're involved with at the moment and hand yourself a ready-made label. This is all superficial nonsense, at its best description. (If a married woman in suburbia becomes involved with a woman, is she now suddenly a lesbian?)

(4) "Socially and emotionally she can no longer relate to men due to their sexism." To recognize sexism in men is to realize that men and women are basically different and that men's hatred and fear of women have been and are oppressing us daily. How on earth could any woman truly see all the implications stated here and proceed to feed herself to these very men? (I know, your man is the exception!) I recognize that you are saying the bisexual who may identify herself as a lesbian. The bisexual, by definition, is equally "open" to both sexes. If not "socially and emotionally," how then? Mentally? Physically? Spiritually? And too: realizing the sexism and the debased picture of men as they are, a woman can simply be anti-male without ever truly understanding what it is to be pro-woman! We're talking about a value system built over time.

I feel there are some women who haven't made any choices for themselves. They bought the conditioning of non-self-determination. Many others are beginning to look around, see, feel, and understand that something is going on! They are in transition. Others have chosen to be either male-oriented or female-oriented. Some decide to be both. It should be clear by now that in choosing both, neither is served well. It is exactly your-self that is tripped up. It must be horrible to try to keep your value system half-way consistent and find your actions keep alternating from it. Think of all the fantastic woman spirit being spent in rationalizations and self-struggle.

For years, I called myself a lesbian. I too had various reasons. As time went on, the multi-closets drained away and I found myself. My value system grew and the internal struggles began to fade. You see, in order to live, I had to decide how I wanted to live. I kept finding day to day "little things" that were inconsistent with my value system. There are only two ways out. Either an action is devaluated and thus not done, or is valued and is done. In other words, a maturing process brought me to Lesbian with a capital L.

The most recent front I had to deal with was a philosophical one. I considered myself a lesbian. I put all my energy and commitment into women. I had stopped even the mental trips with men, finding I much preferred intellectual discussions with women. And yet. . . one thing remained. A thorn called humanism. I said that "we are all human beings. . . we're all the same. . . spinning in space on the same planet." Well, the logical follow-through of that is that, if we're basically the same and only cultural conditioning has produced any differences, then anyone could combat those teachings and be an acceptable living creature -- able to relate on any level. The lights went on! That's BISEXUALITY!! I don't want to relate to men at all! -- The philosophy pushed on -- we all have free choice -- "do your thing."

I was challenged to come up with one male that was a full human being. I could not. I tried! Then I had to wonder why I was trying so hard. In desperation, I got more abstract. I began to talk "potential" characteristics if I could find no "realized" ones. This led to biological differences between men and women. Are we different? I said yes. Found I was still reluctant to even look at those facts, however. Didn't want to compare. Didn't want to be a man-hater. I was too "open" and "cultured."

Well. . . those days are luckily over. I know that men and women are like two different living organisms living in the same location (like birds and fish). We have bodies and minds and spirits -- all of us. But those very things are different in men as opposed to women. The male, in fact, is genetically weaker if you do some digging.

I intend to spend my life -- my womanly spirit -- building Lesbian Nation. That is my Christmas Fantasy. A place where responsible, committed women can live and work at the shores of the sea. There are no men there. No thoughts of men even. Only women. Bisexuals? Heterosexuals? Oh, yes, they are open to men -- you'll find them at Bi-Landing or Straight Acres. As for me, I'm at the beach, busy reading LESBIAN VOICES.

-- Debbie Smith

THE VICTIM

by Camilla Decarnin

She had walked for an hour in the new high-heeled sandals, and now pain shot from the ball of her foot up through the arch each time the thin soles struck the concrete. Already the moon, a sharp, polished disk, had travelled its terse arc -- a strip of night up between the tenements all she could see of its path. She had no watch.

On the next corner she slowed, glanced at the last paper clamped behind the glass of a newstand.

MAD DOG VICTIMS!! it blared, attempted sensation under the exhausted bluing of the streetlight. Her lip lifted, but she pulled the change purse from the pocket of her raincoat, fed the dimes and nickel into their slots. A car whisked past. When it had gone, she let herself slump a little against the lamp-post, resting her burning feet and reading. Second Torn Body Found in Alley. A man in an alley; she thought of the man who had called to her from one the night before; of the man who'd clicked his tongue at her tonight as she'd hurried by his front stoop. But she'd quickened her step in the agonizing heels, and he hadn't followed her.

With a hard breath she leaned away from the lamp-post, stepped off the curb. It must be nearly midnight; she must be over a mile from her apartment. After the brief rest each step seemed even more painful. A car honked two streets away. Where windows were lighted on a third floor someone's shriek bubbled into laughter. She made the rest of the block limping on both feet. Later, she promised herself, she would carry the shoes, despite the glass-littered sidewalks. She wore no stockings.

A block away, on the other side of the street, a man leaned by a window that flickered with feeble orange neon script: Beer. He had seen her. She stiffened her hobble, clutched the folded newspaper down near her thigh. Ahead were parked cars, five or six by the curb, one nosed into a black alley.

Out of the corner of her eye she saw the man straighten, ambling too casually off the sidewalk, onto the pavement. Her heart lurched; her hands went icy. She pretended not to see him -- baggy pants, hand in one pocket, loose jacket, stubble beard, cap; a wino panhandling? -- wondered how any woman could run in such shoes. He veered toward her, staring now. She passed the car in the alley.

"Hey, baby..." Her breath caught in her throat, but she quickened her pace without looking at him. He bounded between two cars, cut her off, hands out from his sides, and, finally, she stopped walking.

"What's a matter, think you're too good for me?" He shuffled closer, one hand digging back into his pocket, eyes darting. "You're no better'n anybody else, you can't say hi to somebody?"

She took two quick steps back, came up against the car; the alley loomed black to her right. The street was deserted. She made a small sound in her throat, choked it back as he angled closer, maneuvering to cut off escape around the back of the car; there was still the front. If he followed her... Her breath dragged in her throat and she leaped into the alley, past the front fender -- His weight crashed against her back, bearing her down.

She kicked off the sandals, twisted, lunged. Damp cement scraped her knees, her flinging hand met corrugated tin of garbage cans, something clawed her shoulder, ripping the raincoat back, bursting snaps. Her breast burned where his nails had dug. She twisted again, left the raincoat in his grasp. Scrambling, she felt a hand snatch at her calf, then he lunged, and she heard him exclaim at her nakedness before she drowned his voice in her own snarl. His hand roughed back harsh fur along her flank. He gasped, bucked off her. She saw the flick of light along a blade, snapped where she knew the wrist must be and blood smoked hot on her tongue, spurted, steaming her nostrils with the scent that was lust; mingling in her brain with his scream. Flinging herself backwards she dragged him out of the last light; as he fell, she crushed the bones of his wrist between her powerful jaws.

for JESSIE

by janice kendrick

my grandmother & i
took naps together long ago
she under two pillows
& i with one eye open
as long as i could
wondering how she breathed
under there
she was always gone
when i awoke
& always there
when i needed her.

in jessie's house
there was room for only one rule:
never tell a lie
& i cannot remember one time
that honesty ever
got me in trouble
i could carry the burden
of the most terrible guilt
to her
& she would make it disappear
with the healing magic
of her unconditional love.

when i grew up some
& lived hundreds of miles away
& had traumas trying to deal
with life & love & myself
the phone would ring
& it would be Granny:
"i had a feeling
something might be wrong
& i just wanted to call & ask
if there's anything i can do.
just ask me."

i never asked for anything
she didn't give
& nothing she ever gave
came attached to strings.

when i told her my love for
a woman
was as natural & as free
as she'd taught me to be
she looked me right in the eye
& said:
"whatever makes you happy."

i've slept in her house
with a dozen different lovers
in a bedroom
with no lock on the door
& no need for one.

each woman i have loved
she has loved
as fully as they would allow
& when my lover left me
not long ago
she said this:
"life goes on, in & out, up & down, etc" &
"there's a world full of women out there."

this woman
two generations from me
uneducated
worked hard all her life
has given me more
than i can ever repay:
the space to be me
whoever that is
without fear of losing
the smallest measure
of her love.

jessie is taking naps again these days
her heart needs special care
one day i'll wake up
& she won't be there
& in that unimaginably vast space
left by her absence
i may begin to see
how well she prepared me
to accept life
& to be myself
with love & honesty.

MARYBELLE COLLINS TYPES WITH HER TOES

by Judith Schwarz Freewoman

One thing about Marybelle is you sure couldn't call her a quitter. That kid had more spunk than all the rest of us put together. Every afternoon after we got home from school, we'd see her ridin' that special-made bike of hers, all strapped on tight and gritting her teeth. She didn't much care that she looked kinda strange, what with trainer wheels on the bike an' all...nah, she'd just make a face or stick out her tongue if any of us laughed at her. An' honest to God, I ain't never seen nobody make a more awful face than she could. Her daddy would walk a few feet behind her, in case she fell, which happened a lot, even with the trainer wheels an' all. She never cried or nothing'. She'd just sorta smack at her body and get back on again.

It weren't that we were such mean kids or anythin', laughin' at her. It was just that she was so funny-lookin', it was almost scary, an' we had to laugh to show we weren't shook up when we saw her comin'. I don't mean funny-"Ha-Ha", neither, I mean funny-strange!

I mean, Marybelle Collins was a mess! My granny tole Mrs. Walker that when Marybelle's mama first got a look at her, she like to died! The doctors had to shoot her up to get her to stop screamin'. Hell, I can believe that, 'cause it's hard to keep from hollerin' when you see her now...and figure what'd it be like if she was your own kid! Jeez-how creepy can you get?

One afternoon a couple of years ago or so, my granny baked some pies for the American Legion ladies' auxiliary sale, an' I got elected to take 'em to the Collins' house, on account of me standin' around lookin' like I had nothin' to do. Boy, was that stupid of me! I shoulda known those pies weren't all for us to eat! Anyway, Mrs. Collins was headin' the bake sale, so I had to cart over the pies, an' I tell you, it was real hard work, what with them smellin' so good an' all. If my granny hadn't already called Mrs. Collins an' tole her how many I was bringin' over, I would have snitched one of 'em off my sister's wagon for sure.

The Collins' house is a big ole spooky-lookin' place down around the corner from our house. My cousin T.J., who lives in New Jersey an' don't know nothin', always calls it a "mansion," which just goes to show how dumb he is. I mean, it don't have a garden or nothin', so it's just a plain ole house. Still an' all, it's got a funny feelin' to it when you see it, like a place with secrets. I always tell my kid sister if she don't shut up an' behave, one day I'll just take her over there an' dump her an' walk away. That always shuts her up quick.

Anyway, when Mrs. Collins answered the door, she looked mighty glad to see me, which was sorta strange since she hadn't never seen me before. She rattled on an' on about how she was "frazzled near to death with all this baking," an' she came down the steps an' helped me carry in the pies. I felt real curious to see inside the house, so I jumped at the offer of a piece of pie she had made extra for her family.

When we walked in the kitchen, I almost dropped the pie, 'cause there sat Marybelle, big as life, like a big rag doll. She was tied into a thing like a big high-chair, with a napkin wrapped around under her chin, an' she was starin' daggers at me. I mean, I caught on right away that the last thing she needed that day was to see me come sash-shaying through the door into her own home. I reckon she figured if she wasn't safe inside her own territory, where could she go to get away from smart-aleck kids laughin' at her?

Here I was, in a real pickle now. I sure didn't care to stay an' eat a pie with Marybelle

starin' at me, but I had gone an' said yes, so I had to. I figured I could count on my well-deserved reputation as a fast eater to get me out of there quick, so I sat down at the far end of the table from Marybelle. Then I noticed Mrs. Collins was bustlin' around settin' the table like we two was enjoyin' a fancy tea social. She kept up a steady babble about whether "you two young ladies" would prefer a coke or lemonade with our pie, an' "how fortunate you came to visit us -- We just love company, Marybelle and I." It's a good thing for her she had her back turned, otherwise Marybelle's look could have put her in jail for killin' her own mother.

She finally got everything on the table, an' then she remembered that she had to call some lady about the bake sale, so she tole us "girls" to enjoy ourselves, an' left the room. I dove into my pie, an' hardly tasted it, I swallowed everythin' so fast. Marybelle got off to a slower start, an' she made so much noise I was scared to look up, but I finally did. Jeez, what a sight she was! She had cherries in her hair, pie everywhere but in her mouth, an' red streams of juice tricklin' down her face onto her napkin. She looked for all the world like a mass murderer had just finished butchering up her somethin' fierce! I just couldn't help myself, I really, honestly, truly couldn't...that sight took me by surprise so bad, I let out a whoop so loud, I bet my granny heard it back in our nice, safe normal house where I wished to God I was right then. It scared Marybelle, too, 'cause she looked around fast to see what had got me so spooked. When she realized finally that I had got so scared just lookin' at her, she tried to throw the pie at me, but it just hit the floor beside her chair.

It was funny (funny-strange, I mean) but the minute she did that, I wasn't scared of her no more. I felt so bad inside, like the time my dog got run over, but I sorta knew she didn't like soppy folks who bawled over her any more than I did. I went an' got the pie an' cut two more pieces. I set my piece down at the place next to her chair, an' put her piece in front of her. Marybelle was so mad, she wasn't about to have no peacemakin'. This time she hit me with it, 'cause I was so close. I watched the gobs of cherries sliding down my legs into my sandals, and I started laughin' all of a sudden so hard I had to hold my sides. Marybelle started gettin' madder, but then she saw that this time, the joke was on me. It's sorta hard to tell with Marybelle, but I think her gurgles were her way of laughin', too. She had got one up on me, but I wasn't sore, 'cause what the heck, I deserved it, didn't I? Mrs. Collins came tearin' in, an' about died when she saw us both covered with cherries and our clothes all stained. Jeez, she was mad. She was just yellin' about how she was gonna throw me out an' call my granny to give me a lickin', when she stopped an' noticed "Marybelle's laughing!" It sure shook her up some, I could tell, so it must of not been somethin' that happened regular-like.

After we ate ourselves sick, Mrs. Collins tole me to come back anytime, and there'd always be somethin' to eat. I did go back, now an' then, but not too often, 'cause after all, Marybelle couldn't talk or run or nothin', so it was hard to play anythin' with her. I did beat on a couple of kids when they laughed at her after I had tole them they better not.

Then her daddy got a new job up north, an' they moved away. The reason I was thinkin' of her today was Marybelle sent me a letter. It turns out she's been goin' to a special school, an' they taught her how to type with her toes. All these years she's been readin' an' thinkin', an' now she writes real well, big thoughts like you'd never believe were inside that messed-up body. I reckon she's gonna be somebody famous, an' one day I'll be sayin' I knew Marybelle Collins when all she could do was gurgle.

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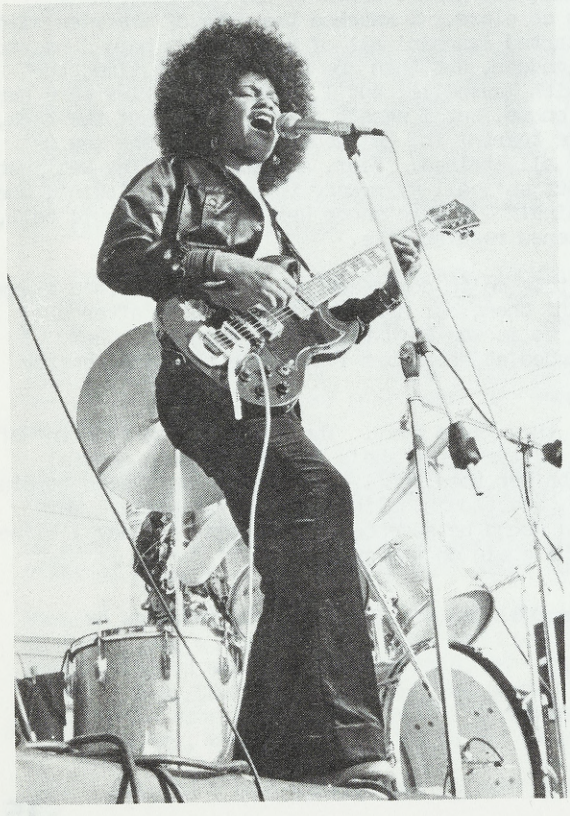
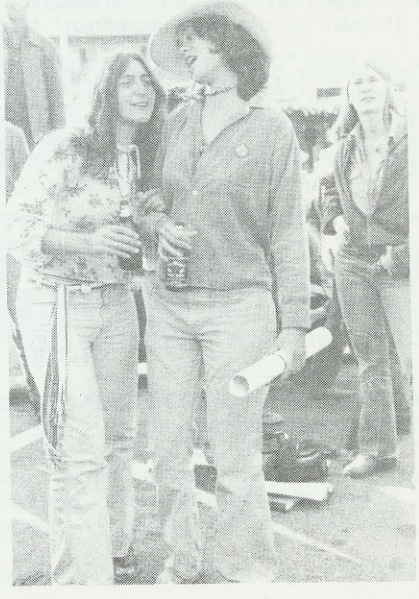
PHOTOGRAPHS FROM WOMEN'S CELEBRATION DAY
October 27, 1975
BY ANN FRIAUF

Picture a clear sunny day in October, fine musicians and performers, and a lot of fine women out having a good time--and you might get some idea of the incredibly high energy level on this day of celebration. This event happened on Veteran's Day in the Co-op parking lot in Berkeley, and in addition to fine singers, dancers, a theatre group and women's band, the parking lot was filled with women displaying and selling arts and crafts, handing out information about their groups, selling feminist posters and literature, getting petitions signed, and on and on. By the time Sweet Chariot started to play to wind up the day, women were jumping up and down with the first beat. I was having a fine time running around with my camera, capturing perhaps a little of the free-flowing joy and energy of this day to share with others.





ON SITTING BEHIND THE LESBIAN-FEMINIST ALLIANCE TABLE
AT THE WOMEN'S FAIR

I

You human beings are so shy
you walk past this table &
your smiles congeal
& your eyes skate by without, you hope, any change of expression
--do you think I don't know you? I'm you,
little human beings, I've passed by
and I remember: the crippled man
(one so seldom sees
the crippled woman)
the foreigner,
the new configuration that panics the blood's
ancestral images. So you pass for blind
and I allow you to do this, by not staring at you;
make no demands;
but sit here with my hands folded graciously, trying hard
not to alarm you.
Even so you skirt me,
wary as squirrels, or sparrows.
Don't you recognize me?
I know
it's easier to sit behind this table
than to smile at me sitting behind this table.

II

Two women come I know,
soundweavers, stop to talk to me
and move away. . .ah,
you two
look so good,
among the tables wandering hand in hand
love gentle in your eyes -- the
way your shoulders turn
slightly toward each other at each pause,
in wordless oracle: you human beings look, look,
look at us, and know that
what you see
you cannot fear.

-- Mog Duff

WHY GAY PRIDE?

In 1928, Radclyffe Hall, author of THE WELL OF LONELINESS, wrote as follows:

> Then, suddenly, Stephen knew that unless she could, indeed, drop dead at the feet of this woman in whose womb she had quickened, there was one thing that she dared not let pass unchallenged, and that was this terrible slur upon her love. And all that was in her rose up to refute it; to protect her love from such unbearable soiling. It was part of herself, and unless, she could save it, she could not save herself any more. She must stand or fall by the courage of that love to proclaim its right to toleration.

This paragraph may well have been the beginning of modern Lesbian Pride. Certainly the author meant what she said, as she fought to prevent censorship of her book, which was viewed by the government as obscene by the very nature of the subject with which it dealt. Generations of Lesbians have read THE WELL OF LONELINESS since then, including those of my own generation who grew up during the conformist forties and the fearful fifties. We have seen that particular period of Puritan Morality crumble -- to be replaced, as if in a vacuum, by a pervasive amorality, which will accept and tolerate just about anything -- since any form of morality, any standard of values, any code of right behavior is now regarded as a throwback to the oppressive Puritanism. Toleration reigns. In short, our society has moved from believing that Lesbianism is wrong to believing that "there is no right or wrong" -- "do your own thing," no matter what it is.

Gay Pride, as I see it, stands in ideological opposition to both extremes. Gay is not wrong, gay is not amoral: "GAY IS GOOD"! Yet many gays do not themselves know it. I have, in my time, met many Lesbians who were gay only because they felt they could not "help" it; at heart, they believed that straight was better and hoped ("someday") to marry and have children and live a "normal" life. I have met many more Lesbians (perhaps the dominant majority) who subscribe to the non-ethics of amorality, or to moral relativism. I have met only a very few Lesbians who truly believe in their hearts that Lesbianism is good and right and healthful -- and even fewer who would not add "for me, that is, not for you."

I believe that Lesbianism is MORAL. That is why, if I could, I would go back through time and change one word in Radclyffe Hall's paragraph -- the word "toleration." I do not wish to be "tolerated" or "accepted" by straights -- any more than I would ask them to "tolerate" the fact that the earth moves around the sun. As Galileo muttered under his breath while being forced by the Inquisition to recant from his heretic view of the universe, it doesn't change the facts.

Nor would I pay straights the compliment of holding their view and their judgment of me above my own judgment of myself. I know who I am, I know I am good, I know my love for a woman is good and real and true. How obsequious I would be to plead for "toleration" or try to convince straights that my view of life and love can be "acceptable" to them! On the contrary, I judge them for their judgments of me and of Lesbianism. Why, after all, should gays abandon the whole field of moral judgment to the straight society?

This essay, therefore, is not directed to straights. This is addressed to gays, and specifically to Lesbians.

If you are a Lesbian, yet do not believe that Lesbianism is GOOD, then you are in trouble. You are acting on desires that you feel are wrong, and you are damaging your integrity. The result is the self-contempt and mutual contempt so often prevalent in "gay life." Self-contempt can and will ruin your chance for happiness. Do some introspection. If you do not feel PROUD of your Lesbianism -- if you feel conflicted, ambivalent, or wrong, it's time to do some thinking. You need to discover Gay Pride.

If you are a Lesbian and believe that Lesbianism is good, then you must face the question

of having the courage of your convictions. In the past, most of us have felt forced -- under threat of loss of employment, loss of career, social ostracism, even arrest and imprisonment -- to remain in the closet. This is understandable. Yet it is hard to stay in the closet, to be deceptive (even though justifiedly), without damage to self-esteem. Also, staying in the closet gives straights power over us -- whoever has a secret must live in fear of discovery and worry constantly about protection. Coming out takes society's chief weapon away and frees us to fight back. You cannot experience the fullest extent of your Gay Pride while hiding in the closet.

If you are a Lesbian and are out of the closet, it's time to re-examine your values and your relationship to society. Is the battle over? Have we won? I don't think so. We have made many gains, particularly in civil rights. There have been legal changes. The social atmosphere has also changed somewhat -- our antagonists find less support for their hostility toward us, and we are probably in danger of becoming the latest "radical chic" minority accepted and patronized by our "tolerators" as their badge of liberalism. But the real battle hasn't even begun: Lesbianism is a moral issue. Toleration of our "differences" is not enough. We must win a moral victory against a culture that has regarded us as unnatural, queer, freakish, sick, unstable, depraved, immature, cowardly, retarded, perverted, possessed, sinful, obscene, titillating, criminal, entertaining, irresponsible, illogical, and wrong. This victory must be won, first and foremost, in the soul of each one of us, as we learn that we are not wrong, we are right and good. Our emotional reward will be the sense of Pride that comes with knowing that we have virtue and integrity. Then -- if we must concern ourselves with what straights think of us (and I'm not convinced that we must) -- we will not plead for toleration. We will demand the recognition and respect that is our rightful due.

This is why we need Gay Pride.

-Rosalie Nichols

Oh Beautiful Woman!
by Carolyn Shama

Our fingers touched - so lightly - but with such
electrical magnetism
it -

Traveled to my heart - making it pound without reason -
and my breath come short and spasmed
which -

Made me look from our hands to your eyes - and could
only stare into them in bewilderment
that -

I cried out with joy - Oh beautiful woman - that you
could unearth such deep feelings within me
that -
I would want to kiss you - all over you - every soft
curve, every gentle place, to bury myself in you
to -

Want to love you as no one ever had before - or would
or could again - in joy, in wonder - my beautiful woman

POLITICAL PRIMER

by Bonnie McGown

One measure of the extent of oppression is how well it is hidden from the oppressed. Often it is not a readily identifiable person or law that does the oppressing. Instead, it is the societal pressure to be alike which we all live under. Being "different" from the straight world is one thing. How well and how often you have to hide that difference is being oppressed.

Lesbians who claim that they are not political or have no interest in politics often have no understanding of their own oppression. Lesbians who claim not to be oppressed are also out of touch with the reality of oppression. The answers you give yourself to these questions can help you realize more about your oppression as a gay woman:

When everyone at work is recounting their experiences from the weekend, do you feel you can't tell what you did, or with whom?

Can you send the short story you wrote about meeting your lover in a laundromat to Ladies Home Journal? To Cosmopolitan?

When you go out, can you go anywhere you want and dance with your women friends, or are you kept "segregated"?

Can you gaze romantically at another woman over a lingering dinner in a restaurant without the waitress getting weird?

Do you tell people you're gay apologetically -- sorry for them having to "deal" with the subject?

Are laws against things like lewd behavior and disorderly houses enforced when it comes to you, but not when it's Mr. and Mrs. Jones?

What kinds of counseling are available to you? Concerning mental health, credit, insurance, lesbian families? Do you have a sneaking suspicion that everything is geared for a nuclear heterosexual family, with dad at the helm, etc.?

Can a woman get credit? Could you and another woman buy a house? Can you file a joint tax-return without hassle?

Can you adopt a child? Or even be a foster parent? Keep your own child in a divorce?

Speaking of serving, could you be in the armed forces (where you could learn some skills, qualify for the G.I. Bill, etc.)?

Could you legally marry another woman if you wanted to?

If you're an out-front lesbian, can you be licensed in a profession, or are you considered guilty of Moral Turpitude?

Can you hold hands in church with your lover? In the grocery store?

Can you get couples discount rates?

Are you invisible?

These are everyday-type questions, yet we tend to think of them as private problems -- for each individual to deal with as they come up. We see that they are really political problems when we see that all of these problems occur all the time, and not just to you, not just to me, but to all of us, everywhere.

It now becomes apparent that you cannot claim not to be political. The degree to which you realize -- internalize -- your oppression is the degree to which you will become radicalized. As Jo Daly has said, not being radical is political suicide for gay people. And in the end (as in the beginning), what is personal and what is political are the same.

Know Thine Enemy

". . . If women have persistently lower pay and poorer jobs, even after correcting for the motherhood-dropout, then the simple reason must be that their marginal productivity tends to be lower than men. . .

". . . Furthermore, the women libs have fallen into a logical trap in their charge of centuries of male brainwashing. For if this charge be true, then how come that men have been running the culture over eons of time? Surely, this cannot be an accident. Isn't this evidence of male superiority? . . .

". . . at the hard inner core of the Women's Liberation Movement lies a bitter, extremely neurotic if not psychotic, man-hating lesbianism. . ."

-- Murray Rothbard, "Libertarian" Economist
in THE INDIVIDUALIST, May 1970

"The social pathological character of homosexual deviations was recognized. It was resolved that all manifestations of homosexual deviations are to be firmly rejected and prevented from spreading. . .

"A study was made of the origin and evolution of this phenomenon and of its present-day scope and antisocial character. An in-depth analysis was made of the preventive and educational measures that are to be put into effect against existing focuses, including the control and relocation of isolated cases and degrees of deterioration. . .

"It was resolved that for notorious homosexuals to have influence in the formation of our youth is not to be tolerated on the basis of their 'artistic merits.'

"Consequently, a study is called for to determine how best to tackle the problems of the presence of homosexuals, in the various institutions of our cultural sector.

"It was proposed that a study should be made to find a way of applying measures with a view to transferring to other organizations those who, as homosexuals, should not have any direct influence on our youth through artistic and cultural activities.

"It was resolved that those whose morals do not correspond to the prestige of our revolution should be barred from any group of performers representing our country abroad.

"Finally, it was agreed to demand that severe penalties be applied to those who corrupt the morals of minors, depraved repeat offenders and irredeemable antisocial elements.

"Cultural institutions cannot serve as a platform for false intellectuals who try to make snobbery, extravagant conduct, homosexuality and other social aberrations into expressions of revolutionary spirit and art, isolated from the masses and the spirit of the revolution."

-- Declaration by the First National Congress on Education and Culture of the Cuban Government, May 1971, excerpted from the daily organ of the Communist Party of Cuba

". . . I assumed that the delegates to the national Libertarian Party convention would select a person reflecting the views of the party. . .

". . . Rober MacBride, who is now the candidate of the Libertarian Party for President, found certain candidates objectionable -- not for what they believed or did -- but because he feared the press would concentrate its emphasis on these particular issues and the libertarian viewpoint would be neglected.

"The first candidate he objected to was a tax resister. . .

"The second candidate he objected to was gay. . .

"The Libertarian Party calls itself, 'The Party of Principle.' . . .

"The Libertarian Party's Statement of Principles recognizes the rights of individuals to their own lifestyles:

> "We hold that each individual has the right to exercise sole dominion over his own life, and has the right to live his life in whatever manner he chooses, so long as he does not forcibly interfere with the equal right of others to live their lives in whatever manner they choose.

"Yet, the party's presidential candidate has made his position clear: DON'T SEEK THE NOMINATION OF THE PARTY IF YOUR LIFESTYLE OFFENDS THE PRESS. . ."

-- Lloyd Taylor, Chairperson, Peace and Freedom Party, memo to members of Peace and Freedom Party and Libertarian Party, September 5, 1975.

"Homosexuality in the middle ages was treated as the ultimate crime against morality, and the standard definitions of it refer to the 'abominable' or the 'unspeakable' crime. For all this, it was no less prevalent than at any other period in history. The usual punishment was burning alive or, in Spain, castration and stoning to death. Under Ferdinand and Isabella the punishment was changed to burning alive and confiscation of property. Since the old Inquisition had exercised jurisdiction over sodomy the Spanish tribunal seems to have begun to do so, but on 18 October 1509 the Suprema ordered that no action was to be taken against homosexuals except when heresy was involved. Here a curious split in policy seems to have occurred, because although the tribunals of Castile never again exercised jurisdiction over sodomy the Inquisition in Aragon now officially adopted powers over this very crime. On 24 February 1524 the pope, Clement VII, issued a brief granting the Inquisition of the realms of Aragon jurisdiction over sodomy, irrespective of the presence or absence of heresy. From this time onwards the Aragonese inquisitors kept their new authority, which they never gave up, despite the typical complaints raised by the Cortes of Monzon in 1533. Aragon was rather unique in this matter, for not even the Roman Inquisition exercised jurisdiction over sodomy. The punishment for all adults over the age of 25 was burning, according to one description of the practice of the tribunal of Saragossa; minors were whipped and sent to the galleys. But the penalty of death was not rigorously enforced by the Inquisition. Even when sentence was passed, it was very often commuted. In this the humaneness and leniency of the Inquisition contrasts sharply with the invariable execution of accused by the secular courts. Special leniency was shown towards clergy who sinned in this matter, and they were as a rule not burnt except after the failure of repeated warnings."

-- Henry Kamen: THE SPANISH INQUISITION, New York: New American Library, 1965, p. 201.

WEB, for M.H.

Words, the nets of your miracles I have learned to stretch
are strung with the diamonds time distills from heat;
so drink I catch;
no meat;
spiderly
I from myself unreel
the chandeliers of dawn where hot wild light
hangs, trapped in its own chill distillate, to make my meal.

-- Mog Duff

DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM vs. STATE SOCIALISM

by Barbara Stephens

[Submitted in answer to the question, what's the difference between democratic socialism and state socialism -- doesn't all socialism require a government? -- Editor]

In discussing "democratic socialism" and "state socialism" and existing organizations, the question is "what faction do you belong to?" and eventually, if your faction is pacifist, civil libertarian, coop-oriented and anti-state, does your party or nation allow it to exist? In some nations, factions and alternate parties are not allowed to exist. The degree of repression varies in locality and time in history. There had been a time when poets and dissenters in one nation were "liquidated." Since then, they are merely placed in mental hospitals, or exiled to the West if their cases be too well known.

It is interesting that nations that do not allow political democracy also do not allow freedom of the press or freedom of sexual orientation. In Portugal, the nation's only independent newspaper released an item exposing the Communist Party's plan to purge the homosexuals in the Socialist movement out of the government. When the editor tried to print the item, the Communist-dominated union of printers took over the publishing company. This is the source of the triangular battle taking place in Portugal between the democratic-socialists, the Russian-backed Communist Party and the Cuban-style military junta.

Socialist parties everywhere have had factions, including "liberal factions" who would nationalize industries only in name, thus keeping the original owners as profit-sharers, the original managers as whips against the workers, and the same miserable work conditions as existed under capitalism. Also, there have been "revolutionary factions" who demand "workers' control" and "Soviets" with a cynical use of rhetoric. After all, Lenin's cry was "all power to the Soviets!" -- but when the Soviets voted for parties other than the Bolsheviks, Lenin had the Soviets dissolved. Finally, in most Socialist Parties, there have been libertarian factions, as exemplified by Mulford Sibley, and Erich Fromm in the American Socialist Party, who call for non-violence, decentralization, and an emphasis on independent cooperatives as an alternative to state-owned industries.

Bertrand Russell was so right when he cited the truth that when an individual offends the government in a State-Socialist nation, he is black-balled from every job in the land. Decades ago, when Ho Chi Minh overtook North Vietnam, non-cooperating farmers were isolated and shut off from all communication and food-sources. Thousands of families starved to death, as millions of peasants in Russia were liquidated in similar fashion in Stalin's rule in the 1930's.

Indeed, the only just Socialist nations are those that allowed a mixed economy, with a strong emphasis on the cooperative movement. There has been freedom of the press, freedom of art, and freedom of sexual orientation in the Netherlands and in Scandinavia, plus a degree of social justice that would put the Amerikas to shame.

The faults of anarchy are:

1. Failure to differentiate between the benevolent states of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, versus such terrible states as Stalin's Russia, North Korea, and Cambodia.

2. No answer whatsoever to the evils of crime, exploitation, and pollution.

3. A tendency to overlook tyranny and totalitarianism that characterizes so much of Amerikan industries. Amerikan Kapitalism is no longer a realm of little Mom and Pop grocery stores.

Some individual corporations are economically larger than the countries in which they operate. Ford's sales are larger than the GNP of Austria,

> Exxon than Denmark, IT&T than Portugal or Peru. Multi-nationals operate their own intelligence networks, fleets of planes, and banks of computers. For all practical purposes, they carry on their own foreign policy, often independently of their country of origin.
>
> -- Alvin Toffler, The Eco-Spasm Report, p. 12, 1975

> They frequently can escape a nation's labor standards by transferring production to plants located where wages or health or safety requirements are lower. If one nation sets up stringent anti-pollution controls, the multi-national, in principle, can shift production across the border where it can toxify rivers without constraint.
>
> -- Ibid., pp. 13-14

Rather than abolishing the state, or cancelling all laws, let us ask, how can people control the state and prevent outrages such as Watergate or escapades of the CIA from recurring? How can we preserve just laws protecting us from assault and robbery, but save us from unjust laws such as prosecution of victimless "crime."

And finally, how can we achieve a drive towards workers' control in our industries as a bulwark against bosses and corrupt officers in the union? God save us from rhetoric, for

"Between the rhetoric and the deed,
Lies a gulf,
Deeper than the oceans,
Taller than the stars."

A NEWS ITEM THAT GOES TO SHOW THAT HETEROSEXUALS ARE A SECURITY RISK!!!

> "SOVIET SPY'S AFFAIR WITH FBI MAN
>
> "New York: A female operative of the Soviet intelligence agency infiltrated the FBI in 1968 by becoming romantically involved with an agent, Time magazine said yesterday.
>
> "Quoting CIA sources in Moscow, Time said officials of the KGB were jubilant that one of their agents, described as a middle-aged waitress, had become involved with an FBI agent.
>
> "The FBI later broke into the woman's apartment and found bureau manuals and reports, Time said.
>
> "High FBI officials stopped the inquiry into the affair to avoid embarrassing the bureau, and the agent was allowed to resign, Time said."
>
> -- S.F. Chronicle, August 4, 1975

HETEROSEXUALS SHOULD BE BARRED FROM SENSITIVE AND CLASSIFIED POSITIONS, SINCE THE USSR HAS ONLY HETEROSEXUAL SPIES TO LURE THE AMERIKAN UNWARY! SINCE NO SELF-RESPECTING GAY WOULD JOIN THE FREAKISH BUREAU OF INQUISITION, LET IT DISSOLVE IN THE ASHCAN OF HISTORY.

-- Submitted by Barbara Stephens

OMA-GOSH! Is This Feminism?!

The following excerpts from a white imperialist feminist (?) comic book were brought into existence courtesy of IT AIN'T ME BABE COMIX, a publication of Last Gasp Ecofunnies, Berkeley, California. I wrote a letter to them about their distorted view of history and their implicit identification with the oppressor back in 1970 or 1971, but it was never acknowledged, although it appeared in THE INDIAN HISTORIAN and THE BERKELEY BARB. This "comic" book is still around in women's bookstores. Please don't buy it.

What the happy, peaceful, little Pioneers did to the Indians to start this conflict is also not pictured.

And for the benefit of feminist theoreticians trying to trace the connection between racism and (hetero)sexism, it might be added that in the end, Oma is mystically reunited with her dead husband and baby.

And they all lived happily ever after -- except for the Indians who resent this kind of treatment and view this brand of "feminism" with the jaundiced eye that it deserves. . .

-- Rosalie Nichols

DID YOU KNOW?
by Crim

ORDINANCE NO. 17588

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF SAN JOSE. . . TO ADD "SEXUAL PREFERENCE" DISCRIMINATION TO THE TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION TO BE HANDLED BY THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SAN JOSE:

That Topic 15, of Part 2, Chapter 2, Article II of the San Jose Municipal Code is hereby amended by repealing Sections 2235.1, 2235.2 and 2235.8, and adopting and adding new Sections 2235.1, 2235.2 and 2235.8 thereto, said new sections to be numbered and entitled and to read as follows:

2235.1. Policy. The Council of the City of San Jose finds that the population of San Jose consists of large numbers of people of different races, colors, creeds, national origins, sexual preferences, sexes and ancestry; that there exist in San Jose groups of people who are prejudiced and who discriminate against each other because of differences in regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sexual preference, sex or ancestry; that such prejudice and discrimination create and foment disorder and strife, seriously hinder groups of people from bettering their living conditions, promote disease, crime and juvenile delinquency, impose substantial financial and other burdens on the City to relieve or ameliorate such conditions, threaten the rights and property privileges of the City's inhabitants, menace the institutions and foundations of a free democratic state, and thus endanger the public health, morals, safety and welfare. A City agency is created by this Topic through which the City of San Jose officially may encourage and bring about mutual understanding and respect among all groups in the City, eliminate prejudice and discrimination and disorder occasioned thereby, and give effect to the guarantee of equal rights for all assured by the Constitution and laws of this State and of the United States of America. . .

On October 20, several women from the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance attended a meeting of the Gay Resources Group. This group has had representation from many professionals, public agencies, and local groups such as the L.F.A. Its initial purpose was to create a "Gay Resource Book" of services available to serve the gay community's needs. The book is a reality and in final draft form.

On October 3 at Gay Pride Day at San Jose State University, the Human Rights Workshop was organized by members of the Resource Group. Mary Cottrell, Chairperson of the Palo Alto Human Relations Commission, and Betty Sellers of the County of Santa Clara Human Relations Commission were able to attend.

This workshop was to begin the process that eventually may lead to a Task Force on Gayness

to work within the Human Relations Commission at the County level. This task force could be a positive, developing part of the Gay community that can advise and assist in the many concerns that Gay people share. Some of the concerns shared were: marriage, schools, military, employment, educational and training programs, lesbian mothers/gay fathers, youth problems, resource information, political assistance, training programs, churches.

The October 20th meeting began this process. The Resource Group is drafting a letter to the Santa Clara County Human Relations Commission proposing a Gay Subcommittee. This committee will be composed of Gay community people and professionals. It can be an on-going resource utilizing special consultants as priority projects are developed.

In general, it will be a resource and initiating source for Gay concerns, referring its suggestions to the Human Relations Commission, communicating with the media, public and City employee education, and placing pressure where it is needed. This committee can help prepare and back the Human Relations Commission in enforcing City Ordinance No. 17588.

Referral of people to serve on such a committee can be forwarded to 378-7665 or 286-5442, ext. 332.

Several cities and soon the State of California have laws supporting your rights as a Lesbian. If you are discriminated against either blatantly or subtly, call Frank Escobar, 299-3901, Human Relations Commission.

If you're interested in participating in or supporting the Resources group in its efforts, call 378-7665. After a lot of hard work, the door is opening for us. Watch the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance newsletter KEYHOLE for additional information.

[To get in touch with Lesbian-Feminist Alliance by mail or to request KEYHOLE, write to the L.F.A. c/o Kathy, P. O. Box 783, Campbell, CA 95008. -- Editor.]

REVIEW: WOMEN REMEMBERED, Edited By Nancy Myron and Charlotte Bunch, Diana Press, 1974.

The introduction to this attractive little book begins, "We are creating our past as women. We are unearthing our heritage from the hole where men have buried it. . . We can't imagine more because our imaginations are still crippled from the scurvy diet of male history we were fed in our classrooms. History is political. It has been a parade of fossilized stereotypes, used for centuries to keep women in our place and to deny us any pride of past accomplishment. We are still force fed male supremacist, heterosexual myths about our past everyday. . ."

WOMEN REMEMBERED, a collection of short biographies of women who were "fighters," examines the lives of some women of the past from a lesbian-feminist perspective. It contains articles, originally published in the lesbian-feminist newspaper THE FURIES, on such women as Queen Christina, reputedly-lesbian ruler of Sweden (1632-1654); Emily Dickinson, whose prolonged seclusion is believed by modern literary investigators to have been the result of unhappy lesbian romances; the "hoax" of the Trojan Women;the spinster feminist Susan B. Anthony; swashbuckling pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read; and others. The articles are illustrated with photographs and engravings.

As stated in the introduction, "These articles examine some of the ways that men distort our achievements and keep this fighting heritage from us. Whenever possible, they attribute women's achievements to men. If they can't do that, heterosexually biased historians say that an accomplishment by a woman was inspired by a male lover or motivated by a male teacher. If there is no way to pass the credit over to a man, they belittle the woman--ridiculing her as a weirdo eccentric or trivializing her as an object of curiosity." This book provides the beginning of an antidote.

[Available from feminist bookstores or direct from Diana Press, Inc., 12 West 25th St., Baltimore, MD 21218. 89 pp. $2.25.]

AFTER THE RHETORIC IS OVER,
. . .OR. . . SHUT UP AND KISS ME

By MARILYN G. FLEENER

Maybe it is the long summer I spent doing research and "mellowing out" that turned my head around. Or maybe it's getting in touch with my body down at the local "Y" that did it. I'm not sure, but all of a sudden I am reaping the benefits of the work done by the Gay Liberation and Women's Movements.

Growing up Gay in the '50's was a grim beginning to my awareness, as I am sure many of you are aware. But I suppose it means that in a way, I "paid my dues" so to speak. I am now entitled to reap some sort of reward. I mean something besides more struggle and fighting and work.

This little piece is very personal and informal, but so is what I want to say. I think many women new to the Gay Movement for whatever reason are so hot for the "cause" (worthy as that may be) that they forget to enjoy some of the benefits of that work.

One big benefit is being able to have some really fine friendships with "straight" women. Oh, you say, the poor thing has gone soft in the head, she will be used! Perhaps, but I will also be able to enjoy a special kind of friendship that I have longed for all of my life. I don't have to hide in a closet or protect my friendships with lies about myself. I don't mean that I want "acceptance," that I am asking to be tolerated. No, what I am talking about is the new awareness on the part of ALL women in the Movement that Lesbians are an important part of the whole picture. That we are not green (or Lavender) monsters. To experience that turn-around is exhilarating.

To me, to experience the love of "straight" sisters is to bask in a new-found source of light and warmth. They are women, just like me, oppressed just like me, hopeful just like me. The fact that they choose to relate to men sexually, or at least not to relate to women sexually has come to mean as little to me as my sex life to some of them.

For those of you who have not followed this real closely, what I am saying is that separatism, while a good temporary, personal solution, is definitely out with me as a viable course for Lesbianism or any other movement.

I know there are problems working with men in the Women's Movement. There are also problems working with "straights" in the Gay Movement. But it is not always so! It can have its good moments and fun times. We are so into the martyr role that it seems "sin" to have fun. Why is that? Have we started to believe the doomsday predictions? Well, I don't. I see a rosy side to this struggle that I am resting in right now. You might try it. After the Rally, the Parade, the Meeting, the Confrontation, I now come home to a cozy little home with a wonderful partner. Not a little place where we say we are "sisters" or "cousins" or whatever. Not a place where we have "men" over to show off to the next-door neighbor. Not a place to simply wrap our wounds. But a place of light and honesty and freedom.

I know that few have that right now. I know the struggle is far from won. But I know that my sexual life, as of the first of 1976, will no longer be of legal interest to this State. I know that there are now men and women in the legislatures of this nation and some States who are publicly out of the closet and doing fine. I know that every day I hear or see a new class, or workshop, or center, or book or film or counseling center that is dealing with my lifestyle in a positive way. I see that and rejoice! It is a step in the right direction.

Those things were earned by all of us. We have worked hard for it. All I am saying, sisters, is that we should sometimes stop all the doom and gloom and celebrate what we have won so far. In other words, you sweet lady standing on your soap box. . . shut up and kiss me.

HILARY

POETRY SECTION

Curled up in your arms, I say, over and over
"I don't wanna read my poetry tonight"
but somehow you manage to lure me out into the world
then lock the door firmly behind us.
I, the rare jewel you seldom allow
the masses to view, glowing all the brighter come nighttime.

I arrive to weave the words out
a light, airy shawl for the women to
throw around their shoulders
embracing them with phrases where my arms
dare not travel;
while gay sisters get trapped,
caught between the lines of my free-woman poems.
They wait for me to spell out what
I think you already know.

I sneak out of your bed to jot down
3 a.m. fantasies, sitting here lonely, shivering
hoping the pen will move silently tonight
and wishing my heart would do the same.

-- Desi Seagull

HEROISM REVISITED

My taut, heroic face is
Pulled motionless, trying
To understand the why, the how
Of the space left;
Blank air that you just caressed
And left empty.

Air that seeps through me
Reaching wet thoughts, and
My silent smile is evaporating;
Assaulted by streams
That carve my fading smile
Into something else.

-- Karen Gale

The first hard snap-break
is the most painful.

The splitting in two-
death-pregnant pain-rebirth.

The last is hardest to achieve-
living-out the pain, but using it!

Alone, the shock passes
leaving a question of bitter illusion.

A nation of two can "never" end-
I'm left to question the foundations.

Wanting to remember the sweet moments-
and left alone, pondering the last gasping moments of its life.

Finally, the hope of reunion withers away,
replaced by wisdom and practicality.

The questions, all unanswered
become as side-effects to the new life.

And the pensive waiting at the window
becomes watching the leaves turn.

-- Nora Lee

THE POLITICS OF RELATIONSHIPS #5

How am I to interpret
A phone call
You didn't make?

-- Barbara Lipschutz

THE HARDEST SILENCE

Now that you're gone,
The fall colors are a little different.
The first rain fell quieter.
My hands are a little confused, because
I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
My painting wants some drastic advice.
My ideas need perspective.
Sometimes I don't think at all, because
I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
You won't even deal with me.
God damn it woman!
I want it explained to me, because
I've so much to get used to.

Now that you're gone,
You won't even tell me that you
Are no longer any of my business.
It's the hardest silence, because
I've so much to get used to.

-- Karen Gale

Here it is:
The hardest test
Of lesbian-
Feminism --
Can we still be sisters
Now that we're no longer lovers?

-- Barbara Lipschutz

No, I don't want you to be my mirror of life.
    I want to put you in my backpocket sometimes, though,
and let you see what I see in the course of my day.
But, even that doesn't seem right.
    Loving you has to come like living my life,
letting it come and learning what I can.

Yes, I do want to love you, I can't really help that.
    You've gently lifted my tense fingers from their hold
upon my body and mind; I don't need that protection.

But, please, do stay and see the suns come up with me;
    I'll share my hard edges with you.
And you can teach me to be tender.

-- Nora Lee

DREAM SEQUENCE #101

A nun
Who works with me
Had seen me on the street
With my lover
Had seen me take her hand
Had seen her eyes
Answer mine.

The next day
At work
The nun asked me
"Exactly what
Is your relationship
With your friend?"
I mean
You two appear to be
More than fond
Of each other,
And it's really not
Any of my business
But I'd just like to know
What it is
You feel for her."
I looked the nun
Directly in the eye,
I said:
"I love her
Like a Sister."

-- Barbara Lipschutz

INVITATION SOUTH

Why don't you come
to Mexico with me
you look to be warm
and cuddly and soft.

We'd get you a pistol
and me a rifle
go shooting fox and rabbits
buy a horse and a mule
to go ridin on.

You'd cook over a wood fire
I'd tan the hides
you'd have rabbit fur to wear
against your skin

and we'd roll around in the hay
in some barn,
center of Mexico.
You'd get used to it
wearin serapes and those
long dresses

out in the sun
you'd be brown as a berry
and mine, woman
I'd take care of you.

-- Patricia Mooney

HOLDING ON:
Trilogy for a young couple
divided by uncertainty

I

You let go of a rock;
It falls.
You let go of a book;
It falls.
You let go of love;
You fall.

II

I hold you.
I hold you close and tight.
I love you.

But I am "open" --
You are "free" --
I'll open my hands --
See?

Others reach out for you --
My hands grab our love.

I grip our love with both hands,
But they are prying my fingers
Loose --
My hands are slipping,
I'm grabbing at space --
I'm falling,
Falling,
Through infinite space.

My wrists tingle,
My head feels light,
I feel dizzy,
I feel sick --

Oh, help me, Love!
Save me!

III

It would be cleaner and kinder
to steal,
to take my values by force,
to rip our love from my hands --
than to persist
in this insidious prying at my soul
trying to get me to drop it.

-- Nikki

SEPARATION

Life pales,
A wan existence
Prevails,
While (our) separation
Continues.
Love grows,
Expands,
Reaches all levels
Of awareness,
While waiting
For (our) two
Hearts
To unite.
Sublime anticipation
Kept secret,
Holding excitement
At bay,
As life goes on,
Apparently undisturbed.

-- Dorothy Feola

NEVER GONE

The soft flesh of
Your femaleness
Brushes against
My mind,
Jarring loose
The gentleness
Of my
Heart.
My arms embrace
Your memory,
As you (almost) materialize
Under the tender
Caresses
Of my willing
Hands.
Then you leave,
Never gone,
Remaining in the
Shadow(s)
Of my (constant)
Love.

-- Dorothy Feola

ALL OUR DREAMS OF WOMEN

It's nothing special, just
another Saturday night in a local bar

a friend calls it "reaffirming the roots."

14 years. the faces change. the towns.
Me too I suppose: long hair now
checkered shirt hiking boots
-- the mountain look.

Guess I'm out of Long Beach
for good

Those teachers I used to date. Did they ever
get out of their closets? Out of their guilt?
Did they ever decide anything with their bridge games?

My friend -- that lovable queen
with the penchant for cross-dressing--
made them nervous.

"You scare me," one said that night.
"You're too open."

I wrote John Cheever type stories about her.
Sat & watched her run serigraphs.
We made the bodies glow in bed. She
was somethin'.

But not for me. I couldn't
have sex in a closet,
couldn't dig being "discreet."

How I hate that word. Even now.

The pricks & stings
of growing up an unrepentant queer

All these years. All those women.

"...It gleams and is gone."

-- Leslie Powell

STRAIGHT LOVING WOMAN

your eyes wet glisten under fringe
of lashes salty glitter
drunk and weeping for your love
of the circus performer
travelling trumpet player
south american poet high on caffeine

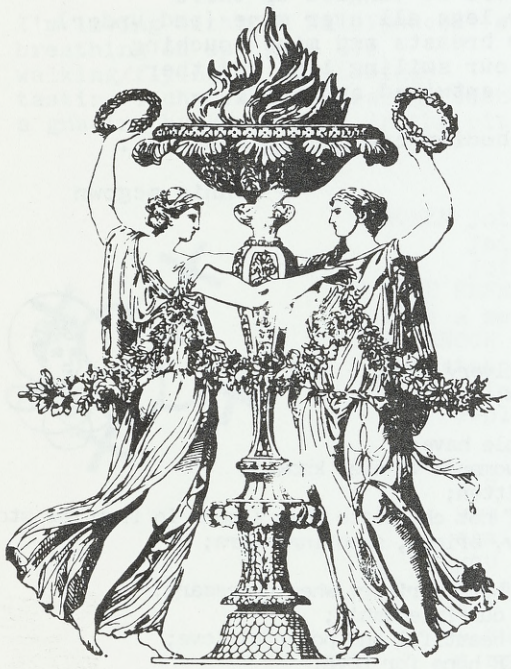
all these words for him and your
hot longing as i hold my need
to touch everything about you

what we have you say transcends
the need to touch
what we have you say is the need
to talk you so tight
in love with ever absent men

i am your listening sister
i hold my own hand

-- Annie Juliet

(copyright Annie Juliet)



MINDSONG

Heroes
like Me
would rather be Keenly aware

rather be feeling a
flowing of Meanings
mouthing the mind-words
Defining emotions
hearing the song
of Ideas in the words

flowing and flowering and
Blooming with pictures
weaving the symbols
in labyrinthine patterns

telling of Wonders
in worlds of My fancy

of Heroes in Action
who'd love
to be Living
love to be Laughing
and keenly
Aware

-- MAIA

THOUGHTS
OF
YOU

Iron mesh containing tiny squares
is brought to the attention
of a reddish-orange glow.

The axed fuel crackles its surging flame,
rearranging itself as it disintegrates
into fluorescent ashes.

Soothing sensations caress my face,
I radiate an illustrative tranquility
in your eerie quietness.

I lie curled beside your hugging magnetism
as you kindle the warmth inside me.

Blazing in gaiety, I ignite in your
candescent offering, thoughts of a fire,
thoughts of you.

-- Pamela Derks

Whose arms were whose?
We were so tangled up there
your legs all over mine (and under)
your breasts and mine touching
all our smiling lips together
hair entwined and happy --

our bodies can <u>say</u> <u>so</u> much. . .

-- bonnie mcgown

GYPSY

Gypsy has hair like the beauty of the silvery moon;
Has a fragrance like baby roses in bloom;
Has manners soft as a dove;
Has a deep awareness which not many people have;
Has a great inner strength of no other woman I've ever known;
Has skin smooth as milk and soft as a kitten;
Has eyes warm and comforting as a cup of hot chocolate when I come in from the storm;
Has an imagination which resembles shiny, bright, shooting stars;
She is bolder than the sun's rays;
She has the courage of a lion defending her territory when necessary;
She puts a fleeting and exciting joy in our friendship;
She brings to me and to many others her beautiful and powerful love;
And Gypsy has given me a NEW and STRONGER hope for LOVE!

-- Mary Gennoy

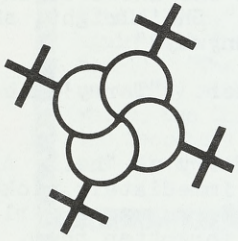
A STUDY IN LIGHT

I'm a
S U N - B U R S T
a
human
being
being so alive/so there
EXPLODING
dreams/reality
MERGE
I'm a
fountain
of
energy
spewing out
ideas/desires/questions/joys
I
am
golden

glowing
it all in my sun
face

feeling
it all in my light
fingers
I'm a cartwheel SPINNING
a star SHOOTING

I'm living within a kaleidoscope world
breathing on spangled air
walking/flying on comet wings
tasting each new idea/hearing each not yet felt experience
a gnawing hunger begins in the pit of my soul
I greedily suck vernal knowledge
creating more craving for more



WOMEN join hands
join hearts
join souls
MAKE ENERGY
make a moving meteor
to KNOCK against
resistant planets
I am joining with you
exploding with you

I'm a
S U N B U R S T
you have lit
against the dark
you taught me
to shine loud
& I am starting to ignite
& burn
a red hot fiery rocket/force

-- Lisa Renton

TERRY

by Barbara Lipschutz

First day of teaching. First job. I'm working at a school for emotionally disturbed children. The class size is ten. Each class is grouped according to some commonly shared problem.

Of course my class's collective problem is "inappropriate sexual identity." Of course.

Nine of the ten children have been at the school previously and I have read their case histories. The tenth, Terry Blakely, has just transferred and, as of yet, there are no records on file. I'm not sure whether it's the fact that she's an unknown quantity or the tough kid facade over the obviously fragile child who lives inside her body, but I instinctively like Terry the best. And Terry obviously likes me. Her eyes smile up at me from beneath her enormous bush.

Once during the morning she slips her arm around my waist and, then again, she graces me with her smile. Her body is straight -- no hips or breasts yet. She has slender arms and lips that show the toothmarks of her nervousness. But she hasn't been biting them this morning.

When we get to arithmetic time, eager to catch their interest with my best tricks, I have the class help me demonstrate set theory. I put all the boys in one group and all the girls in another, telling them that each is a set. Terry puts an arm around each of the other two girls and grins broader than ever. She obviously adores my games. Then I ask the children to arrange sets. Terry composes the set of "Nice People." This is an example of a universal set.

By lunch break I was more than a little in love with Terry but I didn't understand why she had been placed in a school for emotionally disturbed children. I made it a point to sit with the school social worker at lunch. I asked her if she had seen Terry's records yet. When she answered in the affirmative I said, "I really think she's a great kid. She's bright, she's friendly, what's she doing here? What's her problem anyway?"

"You just put your finger on it," said the social worker. "Terry's a boy." Whoops.

That afternoon I very coolly (I thought) referred to Terry as "he." As I said, I thought I was pretty cool about it. Everyone immediately picked up on the change. "He," said Becky Jean. "I thought Terry was a girl." The comments after that got worse. Mercifully I have forgotten them. (But someone else didn't forget.)

Then I saw the metamorphosis in Terry from a mischievous, intelligent woman-child to a sullen, devious, "slow" boy, who had a score to settle with the world. I saw the Terry who was indeed emotionally disturbed.

Terry never did forgive me for making her a boy. I can't say that I blame her/him.

Nichols Xmas Carol

by Katie Burnett Nichols

(From an alleged Computer Projection)

December 25, 1984, dawned as usual, for what else could it do, since the earth still turned on its axis in its ancient way in spite of all man had done to it? Mr. Marlow Drinkwater, who lived up to his name (usually), found that some tenants had moved into his mouth overnight. Bad, since the service at Ben-Buda Temple was only thirty minutes hence.

The temple was pleasant, the organ music precise in its beat, the lighting kind to Mr. Drinkwater's eyes. Seated by his friend Prof. Levi Adelski, PhD, MD, FRS, etc., he hoped for an invitation to dinner, for the savant's life companion Miss Lula Hatch taught domestic science and was noted for her turkey wafers. Some of those followed by mince pie tablets topped off with a minim or two of essence of coffee -- ah -- water Mr. Drinkwater's mouth. "And now the peace of Nirvana be with you," intoned the councillor in dismissal.

"Dine with us," invited the Professor. "We have just returned from the moon, and I would like for you to see the new color slides we took in the Sea of Serenity."

"Delighted, and thank you," accepted Mr. Drinkwater brightly, while groaning in spirit.

"Our 'copter is over here."

Descending in a converted elevator shaft, they were soon seated and viewing the new slides, an amusing one showing Miss Hatch rebounding twelve feet after stumbling on a small moon hole. From her lab, she brought the dinner on small trays together with her prized antique graspers, originally made for hulling strawberries. The warm room, the tongue-flavoring meal, his host's droning voice were inducing a biologic soporific effect on Mr. Drinkwater. . .

"Still 1975," he said aloud, "Must have been LSD in the punch. Never again will I ever. . ." He snapped on his Atwater-Kent radio (1930 model). "The President, the First Lady, and thirty guests will feast on turkey with all the trimmings at the Peoria White House. After which, the Chief Executive will confer with the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Defense. Now, Miss Eclat with an important message, but first --

a Merry Xmas to All!"

Katie Nichols wishes you all a
HAPPY WINTER SOLSTICE AND A MERRY NEW ORBIT

and

LESBIAN VOICES wishes a happy 70th birthday to Ms. Nichols on December 4th with many happy returns -- Ms. Nichols vows to stay around until 1985 to see Halley's Comet for the second time in her life!

OLD MAIDS

SPINSTERS & MAIDEN LADIES:

THE MYTH AND THE REALITY OF THE LIVES OF SINGLE WOMEN IN AMERICA, 1800-1861

by Judith Schwarz

[Editor's Note: Judith Schwarz is a graduate student and teaching assistant at San Jose State University, and prepared this paper as a Senior Thesis in American Studies. She has very graciously given us permission to publish her paper to launch our feminist celebration of the Bicentennial.]

I. INTRODUCTION

Few stereotypes of American women conjure up so negative an image as the one of "old maid." Look the term up in the dictionary, and you will find it defined as "a prim, fussy person; a spinster."(1) Spinster itself is defined as "an unmarried woman past the common age for marrying." (2) The definition perforce assumes that society has set a time limit on how long a woman may remain unmarried, after which she deserves the description of spinster or old maid. Then look up the definition for bachelor, the only common term used to describe unmarried males, and you will find: "a person holding the first or lowest academic degree; a male who has not married."(3) No time limit has been set in the definition, so any unmarried male from six to sixty may well wear the harmless, even pleasant, badge of "bachelor" without undue embarrassment, and without feeling that it reflects upon his personal qualities in any way. He has simply decided not to marry, thus far. But what woman of any age cares to be called "spinster" or "old maid," especially when she knows the last term defines her as a prim and fussy person?

If this label still carries an onerous weight for single women in our own era, how much more so it must have been for single women of the first half of the nineteenth century, when marriage, home and family were considered by most Americans to be the only proper concerns for women. In such an overwhelmingly domestic climate, what kind of woman wore the label of "old maid" of her own free will? What circumstances in her life led her, willingly or unwillingly, to live her days as an unmarried woman? How did

she support herself? How did the world view her as an individual woman, and how did she view herself? Was she accepted as a meaningful part of society once she had established her own pattern of life as an adult woman? If she eventually married after the age of thirty, what may have influenced her decision to wait such an unusual length of time after most of her schoolmates and friends her own age were already wives and mothers?

In attempting to even begin to answer these questions, I found it necessary to limit my examination to any woman who passed her thirtieth birthday unmarried between the years 1800 and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. Although the length of time examined may seem long, it will be shown in this paper that neither attitudes nor circumstances changed in any considerable way towards single women up to the Civil War. Also, in order to examine the individual lives and accomplishments of single women in the early nineteenth century, I relied heavily on the biographies of women listed in the three-volume reference guide, Notable American Women: 1607-1950 (4). This necessarily limits my subject to the women found unusual and notable enough to be given space in this work. Nevertheless, I feel justified in such a limitation, since in all of the extensive research done for this paper from primary sources, not once did I find an unmarried woman written about who was not already listed in the Notable American Women series. No doubt many single women were not notable, but since no record was left of their lives, I am forced to rely on the women whose lives I can examine.

Since Notable American Women became the backbone of this paper, the criteria used to select the women found important enough to be included should be reviewed. The 1,359 women included were selected thusly:

> Only one group of women, the wives of presidents of the United States, were admitted to Notable American Women on their husband's credentials. For the others, the criterion was distinction in their own right of more than local significance. The subjects chosen were necessarily women whose work in some way took them before the public. Distinction in purely domestic roles is seldom documented. . . In making selections, the editors construed the qualifying adjective "American" broadly; some women not citizens were included if they had lived for a number of years in the United States and engaged in important activity during that time. . . the editors made no moral judgments, but included adventuresses, suspected criminals, and other notorious figures of the half-world and underworld. Some women appear whose actual achievement was less significant than the legend that came to surround it. (5)

In addition to the above-mentioned limitations, I might add that due to the special circumstances under which Negroes lived in the era which I am studying, very few black women had any real choice in whether they stayed single or married. Only three black women of that era happened to fall within the scope of this paper; it therefore seemed reasonable to confine my thesis to the white majority. In the appendix at the end of this paper, I have listed all of the women who fit both my own limitations, and Notable American Women standards, a total of 143 single women. They answer the question of the reality of single women's lives in the early nineteenth century. In order to evaluate the amount of social pressure they may have

faced, I attempted to locate a large body of evidence in the primary mirrors of public opinion of the nineteenth century: the popular novels which contained an important spinster character; the parlor songs of the period, as they related to love, marriage, and women; and certainly not least of all, the short stories and articles on old maids and spinsters in the growing number of ladies' periodicals which began to appear around the 1830's. All of these avenues of research proved extremely profitable, and I only feel amazement when I realize that the entire subject of the history of single women has remained so totally unexplored.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although this paper is limited in scope to the first half of the nineteenth century, it seems necessary before we begin to pause briefly and summarize the status of the single American woman in earlier history. Gerda Lerner, in her study of the changes in women's status during the period 1800-1840, states "Periodization always offers difficulties."(6) She therefore decided to group the entire era of American women's history before 1800 under the label "Colonial," since she felt that any changes in women's lives between the American Revolution and 1800 were "transitional and possibly atypical shifts."(7) Her excellent summary of pre-1800 attitudes towards women would be hard to improve upon.

> Throughout the colonial period there was a marked shortage of women, which varied with the regions and always was greatest in the frontier areas. This (from the point of view of women) favorable sex ratio enhanced their status and position. The Puritan world view regarded idleness as sin: life in an undeveloped country made it absolutely necessary that each member of the community perform an economic function. Thus work for women, married or single, was not only approved, it was regarded as a civic duty. Puritan town councils expected single girls, widows and unattached women to be self-supporting and for a long time provided needy spinsters with parcels of land. . . Colonial society as a whole was hierarchical, and rank and standing in society depended on the position of the men. Women did not play a determining role in the ranking pattern; they took their position in society through the men of their own family or the men they married. In other words, they participated in the hierarchy only as daughters and wives, not as individuals. Similarly, their occupations were, by and large, merely auxiliary, designed to contribute to family income, enhance their husband's business or continue it in case of widowhood. The self-supporting spinsters were certainly the exception. (8)

Even after 1800, several of Lerner's observations still hold true for the vast majority of women, single or married. Women still found themselves considered as "female appendages"(9) to their father's, husband's or brother's status in society. Few middle or upper-class women had the need or the drive to attempt to carve their own niche in the world outside their home. As for working-class women, they seldom had either the education or the opportunity to receive recognition for their efforts as individuals. The

time-honored occupations for poorer women, such as working as domestic servants, tavern maids, and farm laborers, effectively hid the woman worker from public consideration, except in a negative moral context.

Nevertheless, many women after 1800, especially women who for one reason or another stayed unmarried, not only felt the need for an expanded life outside their family homes, but they fortunately found new ways to satisfy the necessity of an independent income.

Writing poetry, short stories, and articles for the rapidly growing number of journals, magazines and newspapers helped supplement the incomes of many single women, including Margaret Fuller, Hannah Adams, and the sisters Alice and Phoebe Cary. While at first it was considered improper, immodest, and outside the woman's sphere for a woman writer to sign her real name to her contribution, by the 1830's many women realized the advantages of using an easily identifiable name so as to build an audience of faithful readers eagerly awaiting their author's next article or book. The single woman who wrote for her living often found she had a public as interested in her personal life as they were in what she had to say through her writing. Unaccustomed to such attention, many women writers of the period gained enormously in self-confidence while losing in durability, as they sought to write for the sentimental and highly moral taste of their day.(10) On the other hand, some found the spotlight extremely distasteful or painful, and turned to other ways to earn their living.

Teaching had always been considered an excellent way to utilize woman's "natural" moral goodness and child-nurturing instincts to the benefit of the students. With the growth of the public schools and the number of children in every town and settlement, single women found that society, in need of their services, sanctioned teaching as the most respectable and worthy occupation for unmarried women. Education was by far the most popular way for a single woman to earn her living (such as it was).

> Professionalization of teaching occurred between 1820-1860, a period marked by a sharp increase in the number of women teachers. The spread of female seminaries, academies and normal schools provided new opportunities for the training and employment of female teachers. . . America was committed to educating its children in public schools, but it was insistent on doing so as cheaply as possible. Women were available in great numbers and they were willing to work cheaply. . . 30-50% of the wages paid male teachers was considered appropriate. (11)

Ill-prepared in most instances for the task of teaching a room full of children of various ages and abilities, dependent upon the hospitality of the parents of her students for her room and board, with her habits, comings and goings, and teaching methods meticulously noted and openly commented on by the community she served, it is no wonder that many an aging school teacher found herself becoming a stern disciplinarian in the classroom and a withdrawn, cautious person in her private life. The advantages of her own hard-earned money to spend, a fresh life far from the confines of home, and a professional job where she felt independent in her own classroom, were often outweighed by the harsh realities of her every day existence. If she stayed unmarried, and could not save enough to buy her own cottage, her personal worries and resentments over her treatment by the community led

her into a bitter old age. More than one woman heard the derogatory sneering taunt "old maid schoolmarm" and knew the searing justice behind the stereotype.

If teaching was not the most favorable way of life for a nineteenth century unmarried woman, what other choices were open to her? Apparently, as Harriet Martineau noted on her tour of America in 1837, the choices were very few:

> . . . it is difficult, where it is not impossible, for women to earn their own bread. Where there is a boast that women do not labor, the encouragement and rewards of labor are not provided. It is so in America. In some parts, there are now so many women dependent on their own exertions for a maintenance, that the evil will give way before the force of circumstances. In the meantime, the lot of poor women is sad. Before the opening of the factories, there were but 3 resources: teaching, needlework and keeping boarding-houses or hotels. Now, there are the mills, and women are employed in printing-offices as compositors, as well as folders and stitchers.(12)

The mills referred to are the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts, which in the 1830's replaced the traditional home methods of carding, spinning and weaving all cloth by hand. On the one hand, it freed women from these time-consuming chores, thereby allowing middle-class "ladies" more leisure time; on the other, the mills opened up a whole new field of respectable employment to New England women "who came to the mills from New England villages seeking respectable adventure and liberation from unpaid domestic servitude." (13)

Called "female operatives," the women workers controlled the huge new industrial weaving machines, and lived together in boarding houses.

> The early days were good. The women were paid higher wages than they could command in any of the other forms of employment that were open to them. Moreover, they were from the same stock as their employers and the New England industrialists knew that in order to attract the daughters of Puritan farmers, certain standards would have to be met. Boarding houses with resident chaperones were provided and standards of moral conduct, including mandatory Sunday church attendance, were established. . . The most meaningful part of the experience for each of the women was being, for the first time in her life, in the company of a large group of women. The camaraderie kept the hard working conditions -- 12 hours a day, six days a week, 12 months a year -- from seeming like alienating labor. . . Being paid to produce goods gave the women a sense of dignity; nevertheless, they regarded the Lowell experience as a temporary occupation. Very few among them were "without some distinct plan for bettering the conditions of themselves and those they loved." (14)

An English observer of the Lowell mills recorded the following

wage scale:

> In 1844 there were 10,000 people employed (at Lowell), of whom only about 1/4 were males. . . the average wages of a male were then about 75 to 80 cents a day, or about $4.80 a week. . . Those of a female were from 30 to 35 cents a day, or about $2.00 a week. . . In many cases they were higher. The wages here specified, in both cases, received exclusive of board. . . A great portion of the wages thus monthly received is deposited in the Savings Bank, particularly by the females, who make their work at Lowell a stepping stone to a better state of existence. After laboring there for a few years, they amass several hundred dollars, marry, and go off with their husbands to the west, buy land, and enjoy more than a competency for the remainder of their days. (15)

Of course, many of the women did not marry and go off with their husbands to the west. Many went on to become school teachers in western settlements, as the editor of the female operative literary magazine "The Lowell Offering," Lucy Larcom, eventually did. Although there is no real evidence they did so, others may have taken their savings and bought their own land, or set up shopkeeping as milliners or seamstresses.

We have seen that it was possible for single women to support themselves independently if they had the desire to do so. A question still unanswered is: why would a woman remain single after the usual age when all around her were marrying? Many women, of course, had no choice in the matter; some were too homely to attract anyone (although if they were backed by a wealthy enough dowry, even this would have been no real barrier to matrimony), and others were too crippled or mentally feeble to live outside of institutions or their family homes. Nevertheless, many women, including almost all of the women listed in the appendix to this paper, had several real opportunities to marry, yet stayed single for much or all of their life. Tocqueville's observations may furnish us with one answer:

> Long before an American girl arrives at the age of marriage, her emancipation from maternal control begins; she has scarcely ceased to be a child when she already thinks for herself, speaks with freedom, and acts on her own impulse. The great scene of the world is constantly open to her view; far from seeking concealment, it is every day disclosed to her more completely, and she is taught to survey it with a firm and calm gaze. Thus the vices and dangers of society are early revealed to her; as she sees them clearly, she views them without illusions, and braves them without fear; for she is full of reliance on her own strength. . . It is rarely that an American woman at any age displays childish timidity or ignorance. Like the young women of Europe, she seeks to please, but she knows precisely the cost of pleasing . . . . It is easy indeed to perceive that, even amidst the independence of early youth, an American woman is always mistress of herself; she indulges in all permitted pleasures, without yielding herself up to any of them; and her reason never allows the reins of self-guidance to drop, though it often seems to hold them loosely. . .

> In America the independence of woman is irrecoverably lost in the bonds of matrimony: if an unmarried woman is less constrained there than elsewhere, a wife is subjected to stricter obligations. The former makes her father's house an abode of freedom and pleasure; the latter lives in the home of her husband as if it were a cloister. Yet these two different conditions of life are perhaps not so contrary as may be supposed, and it is natural that the American women should pass through the one to arrive at the other.(16)

Although Tocqueville may have thought both conditions of the American woman's life were "natural," many other people (including some of the women who remained single) did not. The Englishwoman, Harriet Martineau, observed:

> If there is any country on earth where the course of true love may be expected to run smooth, it is America. It is a country where all can marry early, where there need be no anxiety about a worldly provision. . . It is difficult for a stranger to imagine beforehand why all should not love and marry naturally and freely. . . The anticipations of the stranger are not, however, fulfilled: and they never can be while the one sex overbears the other.(17)

A young American woman who was taught to think independently, to be self-reliant, and to cope with the world at an early age (instead of being cloistered from the opposite sex as her European counterpart was) must certainly have found the thought of giving up all her freedom of thought and movement on her wedding day quite painful, especially when she observed the fate of her newly-married sisters. Another foreign visitor, Alexander MacKay, commented on the fate of married women:

> Another feature of American society which soon excites the surprise of the stranger. . . is the little attention which is paid in the social circle to married women. She may be young, beautiful, and accomplished to a degree, and may, indeed, but yesterday, have been the reigning belle, but, despite all this, from the moment that she submits to the matrimonial tie, the American woman is, socially speaking, as the common phrase says, "laid on the shelf." (18)

For the young woman who truly enjoyed her freedom and independence, or who had formed a strong character and sense of self-identity by the time she was of marriageable age, how unappealing the bondage of marriage must have looked! Knowing that once married, she would be shunted aside by society and expected to submissively endure being a mere appendage to her husband, with scarcely a thought of her own which might be separate from his -- what self-reliant woman would not have second thoughts about giving up her freedom?

Another obstacle in the path of marriage for the unmarried woman were the strict social restrictions of the courtship ritual in nineteenth-century America, which were a trial in themselves.

> In her relations with the male, girls were advised constantly to play a passive role. "The safest and happiest way for women," wrote one author, was "to leave the matter [of courtship] entirely in his hands." Though matrimony was a great and noble vocation, it was "an incident in life, which, if it comes at all, must come without any contrivance of [the woman]." . . . Girls were to carefully guard themselves from strangers. More important, they were to have little confidence in men. . . Women were to passively await the male's declaration of matrimonial intentions before expressing even the slightest evidence of reciprocating love. To allow even a "partially animal basis" to appear was to fall prey

> to the evils of blighted love, fomented horrible physical and mental deterioration. (19)

What if the wrong man showed his intentions to woo a woman, while she actually preferred another, but was not allowed by courtship etiquette to let the favored man know? Must she reject the unwanted suitor, and hope that in some sly but clever way she could draw the attention of the man she preferred? As Anne Scott noted in her study of the Southern lady,

> If the neighborhood failed to yield a Beau Ideal, or if the magic spell turned out to be inadequate to attract him, romantic images of love gave way to more pragmatic considerations. Proximity, a thoughtful consideration of land and family connections, or the painful fear of being an old maid were often the basis for marriage . . . In middle Georgia, an area inhabited by solid up-country planters, girls began very early to accumulate a hope chest. Marriages at fourteen and fifteen were common. The girl who had many beaux was envied, and families with a "houseful of old maids" pitied. (20)

How many women must have married the first man her family found reasonably acceptable who asked her, in the real fear and family pressure that she might never marry at all, and thus become an "old maid!" I might add that the entire courtship ritual was riddled with false assumptions and unreal expectations for both sexes. It is a wonder that there were any happily married couples at all, when the woman was supposed to passively await the attention of a man, without showing him whether or not he really attracted her. Also, once he did start courting her, she was repeatedly warned never to be alone with him under any circumstances, or trust him, or allow him to kiss her or caress her in any way until after the marriage bans were posted.(21) Women who actually obeyed all those rules must have found it exceptionally difficult to get to know prospective husbands as real human beings before they were married. In such an unreal atmosphere, it is no wonder that the sentimental romantic novels with no basis in reality were so popular with women readers, both before and after marriage! The novels reinforced the marital ideal, and taught the woman to accept her lot in life:

> A leading characteristic of the traditional family was the conception of women as passive members of the family. They were subordinate and inferior in all ways; their function was to serve men, and their only possible goal in life was marriage. . . Apparently this force was strong for traditionalist beliefs about women and families pervaded contemporary literature. Popular novels were replete with the joys of family living and preached that the duty of women was to marry and then stay in the home. Submissive endurance was the feminine ideal, and winning helplessness was seen as women's greatest charm. These represented the cherished, idealized beliefs of the generation to such an extent that almost nowhere did there appear the slightest hint of discontent or doubt.(22)

The above quote refers to the period 1800-1840, and the author states that women who read novels and magazines written after that period would have found a gradual change in the concept of women's role, which allowed for more freedom of choice in life roles for women as the century progressed. Although it is certainly true that there were more exceptions to the passive, traditional female role-model between 1840-1860, the overall image of women changed little.

> As the magazines depict her, the American middle-class woman during the eighteen-thirties, 'forties, and 'fifties found her proper sphere in her home. Her activities were delineated as those of the European

> upper-class lady. Her proper training prepared her to be an ornament of the home: she spent her time in reading or gracefully executing fancywork. . . she attended parties and balls where her speech displayed her accomplishments in foreign languages, literature, and general knowledge. . . she played the piano. . . she rode horseback decorously; and she devoted some of her time to personal, private charities, dispensing food, clothing, and occasionally money to needy families in her locality. . . As the magazines reveal in all her activities, the lady was guided by spiritual and religious precepts and did her duty as these precepts demanded. The unmarried woman remained in the protection of her home, meeting only the people her family considered appropriate to introduce to her. She shunned remunerative employment outside the home because it was fraught with the dangers of meeting unprincipled people and endangered her person and her status as a lady. (23)

Surely some of those self-reliant, independent young American women that Tocqueville, Martineau, and others found so prevalent must have rebelled at the thought of such a lack-luster life! Luckily, many young women came from families which could not afford to give their daughters the hot-house existence described above, and those who were thrown upon their own resources and ingenuity were more often to be found among the list of women who refused to give up their own hard-earned position in life, no matter how meager, for the stifling security of marriage as their society practiced it.

There is another aspect of society's view of women which also may have influenced many women in their decision of whether or not to marry. That was her potential as a child-bearer. In the nineteenth century, especially, women were defined by their reproductive organs.

> Physicians saw woman as the product and prisoner of her reproductive system. It was the ineluctable basis of her social role and behavioral characteristics, the cause of her most common ailments; women's uterus and ovaries controlled her body and behavior from puberty through menopause. . . A wise deity had designed woman as keeper of the hearth, as breeder and rearer of children. (24)

With sanitary provisions for the menstrual cycle as primitive as they were sinc the time of Eve, women were forcefully (and in many cases, painfully and distastefully) reminded every month of their predestined ability to become pregnant. Birth control in the early nineteenth century was virtually nonexistent, except for the most primitive methods of self-control. A study of the medical aspect of women's lives in this era remarks on:

> . . . the frequency with which childbirth meant for women pain and often lingering incapacity. Death from childbirth, torn cervixes, fistulae, prolapsed uteri were widespread "female complaints" in a period when gynecological practice was still relatively primitive and pregnancy every few years common indeed. . . Young women were simply terrified of having children. (25)

That was certainly not too surprising, when all around them, even the most unobservant must have noticed sisters, cousins, or neighborhood women who had born many children in a very short span of years. Worn out, old before the end of their second decade of life was over, exhausted from their daily chores and perhaps sickly since the last baby, these wives and mothers were walking advertisements against marriage for many young women. Several times in diaries and letters, spinsters wrote of watching their sister slowly die after childbirth, or of their nieces or nephews who were stillborn.

Death became romanticized in the magazines, and it was actually considered fashionable to die at an early age, while the woman still retained some of her youthful beauty. She would become a cherished memory, a symbol of grace and loveliness for her family and widower to pine over. Of course, how much appeal this whole image had for sensible, realistic young women in the prime of life and vitality, we may never know. I tend to believe that it was negligible.

Having seen some of the social pressures all women had to face in the period 1800-1861, and some of the realities of their position in American society, we now may examine the very special and even more concentrated pressures that women who chose to stay single endured.

III. THE IMAGE OF THE SPINSTER

Few stereotypes in American culture can possibly equal the myth of the "old maid" in its incredible hostility, viciousness, durability and prevalence, as shown through the popular artifacts of the novel, song, and magazine articles. In the period 1800-1861, the woman who was still unmarried past the age of thirty was uniformly depicted as a dried-up, wasted "old" woman; as usually meticulously neat in appearance and housekeeping; as a poor cook; as exceedingly homely or plain, if not downright ugly; as frequently near-sighted, either wearing glasses or else constantly squinting; as a compulsive gossip and busybody; as possessing a mean, grouchy disposition; and frequently, as the villainess in a romance.

With such an abundance of riches to choose from, it is difficult to decide which portion of the stereotype to concentrate on. A volume could be filled with excellent quotes substantiating each part of the myth. An important consideration to keep in mind, though, is that this is not a peculiarly American myth; in reality, it is a holdover from English literary tradition.

> . . . much of the disapprobation associated with the "old maid" in England was carried to America through fiction. The word, "spinster," meaning originally merely "a woman who spins," gradually came to be almost synonymous with the epithet "old maid," which from the beginning was a derogatory term. The latter. . . appears in its most disparaging form in the English novels of the eighteenth century. And. . . the earliest American novels were but feeble imitations of the English fiction formula. (26)

Also, much of the content of American magazines was simply reprints (often without credit being given for the original source) from the English press and magazines. Early examples of the English attitude towards unmarried women transplanted into the American literary tradition are Susanna Rowson's Charlotte Temple (1794) and Isaac Mitchell's vicious spinster aunt portrayal in The Asylum: or Alonzo & Melissa (1811). In the latter, even the language and the upper-class wealthy status of the Bloomfield family sound more old-world than one might expect to find in a genuinely American novel. The rather complex plot involves a scheming Martha Bloomfield, who is instrumental in abducting and locking up her young niece, Melissa, in order to keep her from marrying her penniless young suitor whom she loves.

> Martha Bloomfield, Melissa's aunt, who attended her, was about 40 years old. She had been a reigning toast in her youth, but a coquette and a prude. Hence, her numerous admirers relinquished their pretensions as her beauty and graces deserted her. She had received the most flattering offers, some of which she had refused, and suspended others. Her family and fortune, she thought, connected with her personal accomplishments, would, at any time, ensure her a choice of among the humble

> devotees who sighed at her feet, if she should condescend to make the selection. Like many calculators of superior wisdom and understanding, she did not discover her error until too late to retrieve it. Still, she was not without consideration; her father had provided amply for her in his will. She possessed lands, the rents of which were more than adequate to her maintenance. Though she frequently visited among her numerous relatives, yet she principally resided with Melissa's father, who, by humoring her peculiarities, and sometimes adopting her advice, when it did not run counter to his own opinion, induced her to suppose that she held no small influence over him. He had an object in view by this; her fortune he hoped to secure in his own family, provided she should never marry, which, probably, would be the case. She was called Aunt Martha by the family, and Miss Martha by her other acquaintances. (27)

Martha is an excellent prototype of the stingy, close-fisted, hard-hearted old maid. If the tenants of her land fail to agree with her, or are late in paying their rents,

> She made no scruple in turning them off at quarter-day. . . This, she said, was keeping a "sharp lookout," though in consequence of such sharpness, her lands were, generally in a bad state of cultivation. . . (28)

The author implies that what in a man would be deemed good business sense (at least over the non-payment of rents) is to be censured in Martha, since it shows a lack of feminine compassion. In the end, of course, Martha Bloomfield receives her just desserts by dying (still unmarried), and the young lovers Melissa and Alonzo are happily reunited and wed.

Throughout the entire literary output of the early nineteenth century,

> Sentiment and stereotype were the techniques of the day. Marriage--the result, always, of course, of LOVE was the haven of havens, the outer suburb of paradise. . . Husband-hunting, regardless of the consequences, was a necessity for the women of the day, who were both biological and economic captives of the system. Naturally, songs about proposals and marriage were rife. "Mama, Mama, Why Don't the Men Propose, Mama?" was a song that stated the common dilemma. (29)

Husband-hunting was celebrated not only in songs, but in novels and stories. It is especially blatant in the short comic story, "Leap Year: or Woman's Privilege." The plot revolves around a family with four single daughters and a spinster aunt who resides with them. The mother tells her youngest teenage daughter:

> Let me advise you and your sisters to exercise a portion of your sex's privilege sufficient to insure husbands before the year expires. Your papa finds business getting worse every day, and I am tired of having a crowd of single girls filling up the table when there are so many young bachelors looking out for eligible wives. (30)

Notice that there is never any discussion of any of the daughters possibly going to work in order to help the family finances, or establish a career. The only choice that lies open to them -- at least, in the mother's view -- is marriage. Nevertheless, in answer to her daughter's criticism, she later relents a little, although it is difficult to believe she is being truthful. "I should be happy to have my daughters settled in life, but would rather see them die old maids than match unhappily." (31)

This brings us to the question: At what age did a single woman pass over the barrier and become automatically an "old maid?" In the "leap Year" story, the reader is warned quite definitely that any woman past the age of thirty is practically unmarriageable. Witness the description of "Aunt Milly":

> Aunt Milly, as Miss Matilda Mildred was generally termed, who owned to 8 and 20, and had done so for the last 4 years, applauded the girl's resolve [to hurry and try to catch a husband]. . . . This ancient lady. . . resolutely set her cap at Uncle Cremorne (a man of 50), and for a time fondly hoped to achieve her share of the joint resolution relating to Leap Year. . . [Later] Cremorne told Mildred, "I see what you are driving at, but you are too old to be my wife." [Mildred replies] "Old! Become <u>your</u> wife!. . . Why, you are ancient enough to be my father! Marry you! Old! I'm sure!. . ." "I repeat it, madam, that you are too old, or I should be proud to meet your views. A man is in his prime at fifty--a woman at 5 and 20, at the most, 30; consequently, I have barely climbed to the top of the hill, while you have passed over it, and are very considerably down the wrong side." (32)

Besides being a prime example of the typical male character's attitude in these stories, the above quote also points bluntly to the extreme differences in eligibility for marriage between the bachelor and the spinster. Cremorne finds nothing odd in his active courtship of a woman thirty years younger than himself, while Mildred is portrayed as a figure of fun for daring to think a man nearly twenty years older than she would find her "wasted" body and soul attractive. We are left with this telling view of her future prospects for happiness:

"Aunt Milly retired with her cookery books to Bucks County, and is, at this moment, desperately engaged in an attempt to subjugate a Dutch farmer, devoted to his pigs and his pipe."(33)

The other four sisters are happily married by the end of the story, even the oldest (mid-twenties) sister, a widow whom Mildred had complimented "on her escape from the shame of celibacy,"(34) temporary though it was. How odd society's standards were! A man such as Cremorne may never think about marriage at all, until one morning at the age of fifty he wakes up and decides to "take a wife," and obviously the Dutch farmer is not terribly concerned over being a bachelor, whereas Mildred is obsessed by her singleness, and must spend a vast amount of time and energy "desperately" trying to snare a man to cook and clean for. We are allowed to believe that she has no other interest in life beyong marriage, and will never find peace or contentment as her lot in life as long as she stays a spinster.

Another image of the spinster is that of the self-sacrificing woman who gave up her chance for marital bliss in order to care for her parents or other close relatives in need of her services. The martyr occurs frequently throughout the nineteenth century as a stock character, usually in the background as a vague shadow tending to other's needs and consistently neglecting her own.

> And who that will take off the glasses of prejudice, look around, and call up recollections of domestic life either at home, or in other homes, can fail to discover some female form and face -- possibly attenuated and wrinkled by time and care -- moving about the house from morning to night, ever bent on some errand of good to its inmates: now nursing the sick; now contriving some delicacy for the table, or to gratify the juvenile appetite; now bravely leading on to the fight a soap and water regiment, at that semi-annual internal revolution

called house-cleaning, herself in the thickest of the fray; now arranging wardrobes for the Spring and Autumn comfort of all the household -- save herself; . . . in brief, spending and being spent in the service of perhaps a sister, a cousin, or a niece, whose return for untiring, disinterested affection, is the selfish love that considers its recipient invaluable, not as a gentle, unpretending associate, but as a reliable convenience! (35)

Prime examples of such selfless spinsters are found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's The House of the Seven Gables (1851) and Marie Susanna Cummins' Mabel Vaughan (1858). The House of the Seven Gables actually is the first truly American novel with a spinster as one of the major characters. Hepzibah Pyncheon, age sixty, is the epitome of all the "wasted" qualities of the old maid stereotype. She has spent her life caring for the ancestral home, waiting for her brother to return from prison. Nervous, constantly talking to herself for want of better company, Hepzibah finds herself forced for the first time in her ladylike life to earn a living in order to keep from starving, or accepting the aid of a despised relative. She manages (barely) to open a small shop in her home, which she fortunately only has to oversee for a single long, dreary day, when a young niece comes to her rescue and manages it for her. Hawthorne describes her as a "poor thing" who "never knew, by her own experience, what love technically means." (36) The author discounts Hepzibah's sacrifice and love for her brother:

How patiently did she endeavor to wrap Clifford up in her great, warm love, and make it all the world to him, so that he could retain no torturing sense of the coldness and dreariness without! Her little efforts to amuse him! How pitiful, yet magnanimous they were! (37)

The self-sacrificing spinster in Cummin's Mabel Vaughan is Miss Sabiah Vaughan, the unmarried aunt of the title character. She had spent her entire life caring for her invalid mother, and when her mother had died, she accepted her brother's invitation to come and stay with him and his daughter.

We will take a glance at the history of her life. The life of an old maid! A desert, a blank, an unwritten page to the careless, the thoughtless, the unobservant mind. But to the initiated eye which faithfully scans its past, its present, and its future experience, may it not prove a world of strong affections, conflicting duties, anxious cares, and busy memories, whose only register is hidden in one human heart? (38)

The reader becomes aware that Sabiah's strong-minded mother had once stood in the way of her marriage to a poor scholar she had loved. After her family reacted violently to Sabiah's avowal of engagement, the lover left the village and eventually married another. Sabiah, of course, stayed faithful to the memory of her lost love, and remained in the family home,

. . . patiently fulfilling a daughter's duties and struggling with a life-long regret. Nor did the filial obedience and filial respect which had promoted the greatest of sacrifices, diminish or falter during many years of severe privation and trial. . . Sabiah's face grew pale, and her figure wasted with constant care and watching [over her ill father]. . . Sabiah's health became feeble, and her hair turned gray. . . Was it nothing, then, that for 10 long years Sabiah's monotonous existence had been varied only by the petty and vexatious cares and economies which dependence and a narrow income entail?. . . Was it nothing, that all her dutiful efforts

> and habitual sacrifices called forth no praise, while for every omission or neglect she was reproved as if she had still been a child? (39)

The sympathetic understanding shown in Maria Cummins' writing about the life of a spinster points up the contrast between the point of view of women writers and men on the subject of unmarried women. Cummins was only one of many women who wrote movingly of the plight of the "old maid." Invariably, they saw little humor in the spinster's situation, and found many reasons for explaining why her personality may have suffered throughout the years of neglect by herself and society. The portrayals were sometimes condescending; they were seldom cruel or sarcastic. An excellent example of the many essays and short magazine articles and stories written by women with the title "Old Maids" is Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie's story which deserves quoting at length.

> An old maid! Was there ever woman so wise that she could hear the obnoxious title applied to herself without a suppressed sigh? Though few are the old maids who might not have been wives if they had so willed, the sense of incompleteness -- of undeveloped capacities -- of unfilled duties, perforce will cause a passing pang. But who that knows Miriam Pleasance feels that the life of an old maid is necessarily dreary, profitless, colorless?. . . But mark how men -- intellectual, thinking, feeling men -- hesitate to apply the ungallant appellation to sweet Miriam? (40)

Ritchie goes on to tell her readers that even though Miriam has "reached and passed the green ascent of thirty, and is calmly descending the verdant slope beyond," she is not one of your garden-variety stereotypic old maids. "Life has been all gain to her." (41) Ritchie also discounts the myth that a woman must live for love alone, as the main focal point of her life.

> . . . But if Miriam unconsciously admits that love is a "grand necessity" of existence, she feels that existence has other necessities. To bestow her heart, her judgment must approve the gift, and she has not encountered the being (though doubtless such exists) who could win the one with the approval of the other. This is the sole secret of her freedom. (42)

"Freedom" -- a word never used and seldom hinted at in the literary works of male authors to describe the life of a spinster! Can it be that women in the first half of the nineteenth century actually found something admirable in the lives of their unmarried sisters? This conclusion gains more weight when one looks at two of the most popular American folk songs of the era which show a real reluctance on the part of the woman to marry. Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact period the songs were popular, much evidence would indicate they originated in the period we are examining. The first, "Paper of Pins," is sung by a couple. The man offers his beloved several gifts throughout the song -- such as a "paper of pins," "a dress of red," and eventually "my hand and heart" -- "if you will marry me, me, me/if you will marry me." The woman refuses to be bought answering "that's not the way my love begins." In the last chorus, she tells the man that she prefers to "be a withered old maid/and take my stool and sit in the shade" rather than marry him. (43)

The other folk song is a tragic heartfelt wish of a married woman to be single again. It shows the dark side of the dream of marriage, and is called "When I Was Single."

> When I was single, when dressed so fine;
> Now I am married, go ragged all the time.

Chorus: I wish I was a single girl again!
O Lord, don't I wish I was a single girl again!
When I was single, my shoes they did squeak;
Now I am married, my shoes they do leak
(Chorus)
Three little babies crying for bread,
With none to give them, I'd rather be dead.
(Chorus)
Wash them and strip them and put them to bed,
Before your husband curses you and wishes them dead.
(Chorus)
When he comes in, it's a curse and a row,
Knocking down the children and pulling my hair.
(Chorus)
Dishes to wash and spring to go to;
When you are married, you've all to do. (44)

Naturally, these songs were simply passed from person to person, woman to woman. The overwhelming image in the written artifacts of the period is the joy of marriage, and the fear and dislike of women who chose to live their lives without benefit of a husband. It is now time to take a close look at the actual feelings, personality, and history of the real spinster women of this period, and how, if at all, they bear out the assumptions behind the myths we have just examined.

(Part IV "The Reality of Being a Spinster" will appear in the March 1976 issue, including an Appendix of unmarried notable American women and selected bibliography.)

FOOTNOTES:

I. Introduction

1 The New Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary, 1971 ed., s.v. "old maid."

2 Ibid., s.v. "spinster."

3 Ibid., s.v. "bachelor."

4 Edward T. James, Janet Wilson James, and Paul S. Boyer, eds., Notable American Women: 1607-1950, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1971).

5 Ibid., p. xi.

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., pp. 83-84.

9 Ronald W. Hogeland, "The Female Appendage: Feminine Life-Styles in America, 1820-1860," Civil War History XVII (June, 1971): 101.

10 For more information on nineteenth century women writers, extensive material may be found in Ann D. Wood, "The 'Scribbling Women' and Fanny Fern: Why Women Wrote," American Quarterly XXIII (Spring, 1971): 3-24.

11 Lerner, "The Lady and the Mill Girl," p. 88.

12 Harriet Martineau, Society in America, 3 vols. (London: Saunders and Otley, 1831; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 277.9), 3:147. For a somewhat different opinion, see Edith Abbott, "Harriet Martineau and the Employment of Women in 1836," Journal of Political Economy 14 (December, 1906): 614-626.

13 Sandra Adickes, "Mind Among the Spindles: An Examination of Some of the Journals, Newspapers and Memoirs of the Lowell Female Operatives," Women's Studies 1 (no. 3, 1973): 279.

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19 John S. Haller, Jr., "From Maidenhood to Menopause: Sex Education for Women in Victorian America," Journal of Popular Culture 6, (Summer, 1972): 53.

20 Anne Firor Scott, The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 23.

21 Haller, "From Maidenhood to Menopause," p. 54.

22 Glenda Lou Gates Riley, "From Chattel to Challenger: The Changing Image of the American Woman, 1828-1848" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1967), p. 9.

23 Sarah E. McBride, "Women in the Popular Magazines for Women in America, 1830-1956" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1967), p. 437.

24 Carroll Smith-Rosenberg and Charles Rosenberg, "The Female Animal: Medical and Biological Views of Woman and Her Role in Nineteenth Century America," Journal of American History 60 (September 1973): 335.

25 Ibid., p. 345.

III. The Image of the Spinster

26 Dorothy Deegan, The Stereotype of the Single Woman in American Novels (New York: Octagon Books, 1969), p. 7.

27 Isaac Mitchell, The Asylum; or Alonzo and Melissa (Poughkeepsie, New York: Joseph Nelson, 1811; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 226.7), pp. 34-35.

28 Ibid., p. 50.

29 Sandra Perry, "Sex and Sentiment in America or What was Really Going on Between the Staves of Nineteenth Century Songs of Fashion," Journal of Popular Culture 6 (Summer, 1972): 39.

30 William E. Burton, "Leap Year: Or, Woman's Privilege," in A Yankee Among the Mermaids (Philadelphia: Getz and Buck, 1854. Originally published in 1847; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 201.4), p. 27.

31 Ibid., p. 28.

32 Ibid., pp. 30-37.

33 Ibid., p. 48.

34 Ibid., p. 30.

35 Elizabeth C. Kinney, "Old Maids," in The Female Prose Writers of America, ed. John S. Hart (Philadelphia: E. H. Butler, 1852; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 397.3), p. 209.

36 Nathaniel Hawthorne, The House of the Seven Gables (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1851), p. 41.

37 Ibid., p. 159.

38 Maria Susanna Cummins, Mabel Vaughan (Boston: Crosby and Nichols, 1858; American Cultural Series, Microfilm, Reel 148.6), p. 34.

39 Ibid., p. 36.

40 Anna Cora Mowatt Ritchie, "An Old Maid," in Women of the South, ed. Mary Forrest (New York: n.p., 1860), pp. 96-97.

41 Ibid., p. 97.

42 Ibid., p. 98.

43 Margaret Boni, ed., Fireside Book of Love Songs (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 48.

44 John A. Lomax, and Alan Lomax, compilers, American Ballads and Folk Songs (New York: Macmillan, 1934), p. 134.

QUESTIONNAIRE ON LESBIAN SEXUALITY

Ms. Pat Hardman is a lesbian woman compiling material for a book of information about sex for gay women, to fill a need that she sees for a sex book which is not written in implicitly heterosexual terms and does not relegate lesbian sexuality to a small chapter in the back of the book. The book is not being written for a degree and will not deal with "professional" questions such as "causes" of lesbianism. Rather, it will present concrete information for lesbians by lesbians, and it will be distributed through the lesbian community. If you would like to participate in the writing of this book by providing information, write to Ms. Pat Hardman, 1800 Market Street, P. O. Box 151, San Francisco, California 94102.

BOYCOTT

Dear LESBIAN VOICES,

The Mecca, in Santa Clara, has recently instituted a dress code requiring men to wear pants and women to wear dresses. In a gay bar, this is a transparent sexist ploy to exclude women (as well as transvestites). It's legal. But it's obnoxious.

We are starting a boycott of the Mecca immediately.

It is particularly important for gay women to urge male friends or acquaintances not to go to the Mecca. The policy seems aimed at creating a "he-man" atmosphere in the bar in the hopes of attracting more gay men. It is important to show them that sexism doesn't pay!

Let them know you are boycotting (and your friends are boycotting) by phone or letter. Picket! Sit-in! Why not?

And most important, keep your money and the money of your friends out of the Mecca's cash registers.

If you can think of any way to publicize this boycott -- do it! Get it in newsletters, on radio or TV -- anything you can think of. The wilder the better!

In sisterhood,

Mog Duff, Lesbian-Feminist Alliance of S.C.C.

[Editorial opinion: A consumer boycott of anti-Lesbian private businesses is not only one of the most practical ways of expressing disapproval, it is also the most ethical -- because it recognizes the mutual, voluntary trade relationships involved. If a business, whether straight or gay male, doesn't want our patronage, then by all means, we shouldn't go there -- and neither should our friends. Picketing and sitting-in, in my opinion, are a different matter because these actions interfere with the rights of the private business and of the customers who do want to go there. Spread the word -- yes! -- when you find out that a business is anti-Lesbian. We surely don't want our money going into the pockets of those who hate and oppress us! But why have so little pride as to force our way in where we're not wanted? Who wants to be there? Not I. Let's have a permanent boycott of such places! Finally, remember that someday the moccasin may be on the other foot -- Some of us want to establish Lesbian businesses, Lesbian centers, Lesbian theatres, Lesbian parks, Lesbian everything-that-we-have-never-had. Even the few Conferences and Festivals that we now have are invaded by obnoxious males (see Judith Trova's article "Woman's Space and Male Marauders" in the September issue of LESBIAN VOICES). How are we going to have a place of our own if we now help to break down the right to privacy and exclusiveness? How will we answer the accusation of inconsistency when we force our way into a men's bar and then bar men from our meetings? Let's boycott them, yes! And then put the rest of our energy into building a space of our own. I think when we have our own bars and restaurants and theatres and resorts and housing and businesses, we won't even notice that there are male bars where we're not welcome (I don't notice it now). And, m-a-y-b-e (for those who need some consolation/revenge), it just might turn out that some of those gay males/straights will be sorry they alienated us. Think it over. R.N.]

LESBIAN LIFESTYLE QUESTIONNAIRE

A sociological survey of lesbian lifestyles, experiences, and attitudes as a sub-group in our culture. 25 pp. booklet. If you would like to administer this questionnaire or desire further information, please contact Marilyn G. Fleener and Nancy Robertson c/o Women's Studies Department, San Jose State University, 125 South Seventh Street, San Jose, California 95192.

Dear LESBIAN VOICES,

In reference to the June 1975 issue of LESBIAN VOICES' cover page:

The GAY BILL OF RIGHTS -- Is this fact or fiction? Is there such a document and where might one procure a copy? Also -- and of importance to my lover and I was the "Right to marry" on the cover of this issue. Says -- "recognized in Colorado" on the cover. Do you know where we might get further documentation of this statement? Or possibly you could give us more details. No mention of the profound issues on your cover for June were elaborated on in this issue. Why not?

We'd like to know more. Thanks for your consideration.

-- J.F., Arizona

Dear J.F.,

I'm sorry if our cover was misleading. It was meant to be a summary of the main areas in which Gays have had to fight and are fighting still for rights which heterosexuals take for granted. Years ago, there was a dispute between the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis as to whether a separate Gay Bill of Rights was necessary or whether the rights of Gays are adequately covered by the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights and need only to be enforced. As far as I know, no actual Gay Bill of Rights was ever adopted by any representative gay organization. Ours was purely fictional.

The best sources for keeping up with Gay civil rights that I have found are generally gay male newspapers (feminist newspapers tend to neglect gay rights coverage, except for child custody and rape cases). One which I have been following recently and which has good coverage without all the porno stuff is GAY COMMUNITY NEWS, 22 Bromfield Street, Boston, Mass 02108 (see ad this issue). GCN covers both gay male and lesbian civil rights and news of general interest to gays and is published weekly.

Our reference to the "right to marry" in Colorado was prompted by the action of a license clerk in Boulder who issued a number of same-sex marriage licenses before being told by superiors to halt and desist. This made national news last spring. As far as I know, the marriages are so far legally valid. There was another case back East of two college women getting married, and an Attorney General's opinion upheld the legality of the marriage. I haven't heard anything more about these cases lately, so am not sure of their current status. Legal marriage is one of the civil rights that Gays have been working hard on for several years now, and I expect that it is just a matter of time until our right to marry is recognized. Then we will have to face the question whether we want State-sanctioned and delineated marriages or whether we want to draw up our own private contracts. I think the legal right to marry will be of great symbolic value in our struggle.

Perhaps LESBIAN VOICES should carry more articles and information on legal changes and civil rights issues. As a literary magazine, we tend to leave this to the newspapers, but a periodic look at where we stand legally might be valuable. Thanks for bringing your questions to our attention.

-- Rosalie Nichols, ed.

FRAG

I pull the pin of this poem and toss --

catch!

-- Mog Duff

WELL WISHES

Never have I found myself so much in agreement with a publication as with your June 1975 issue -- marvelous. As for the two views of monogamy, thank the Goddess for yours. I had begun to think that the Lesbian relationship as I know it was relegated to the over 50 set and hence dreadfully passe.

-- Rita Laporte, California

I would like to subscribe to L.V. . . . I really enjoyed "'I' by Ramona Roark" in the June issue.

-- A.P., Austin, Texas

LesBeInTouch indeed!

-- S.M.P., Homestead, Florida

You're fantastic!! Just realized "I" by Ramona Roark was a fiction, written by none other. . . FANTASTIC article. Would like to know if you have any other "published" works, that I may find in a library, or. . .

Also, LESBIAN VOICES is the finest feminist publication I have seen yet. I loved Nikki's Man-Hater's Page. Hope to see more of the same in future issues. Looking forward to the next lavender booklet!!

-- D.M.P., Brighton, Massachusetts

[Editor's Note: Thanks -- I'm really glad you enjoyed my story. Re other works, I used to write a few things for THE LADDER years ago under my gay name "Nikki" and, more recently, I have written for THE INDIAN HISTORIAN and for some libertarian publications which I can no longer recommend. Now that we have a press, I hope to gather up my scattered articles soon and get them under one (or two) covers. -- Rosalie Nichols]

A friend from Tennessee sent me a copy of your publication, and I was much interested in it. I was especially pleased with the article entitled "'I' by Ramona Roark" by Rosalie Nichols. I've been in the Lesbian movement for a long long time, and I could not agree with the sentiments of that article more -- in EVERY way. To me, "I" is an important word, in capital letters. I like me, and I am not ashamed to say so. Good luck on your publication. . .

-- "A Friend from New Jersey"

Just got the fourth issue of LESBIAN VOICES. I'm into it and excited! -- taking time out to share my enthusiasm and appreciation with you. Who is that Judith Trova?! I would have enjoyed reading of her interests and background as intro or sequel to her article -- which was beautifully done! It hits me where I live. And the short articles by women making reality beautiful gave me a peaceful sense of: all's-right-with-the-world. That's the kind of inspiration I need when I'm most intensely aware, too often I focus on what's wrong with my world.

I'm deeply impressed with your contributors. How satisfying it must be for you to have the consistently high quality of your ideas and writing answered in kind! It's one thing to have great ideas--but altogether another talent to be able to convey ideas clearly through the written word. And, as I know all too well, still a greater level of integration to arrange one's lifestyle to get those first priority ideas into print.

-- Maia Smith, Florida

Just a note to say thanks for being there when I needed you -- I know the timing of LESBIAN VOICES is accidental to the rough times of my life -- but somehow it still felt like you knew and held out a hand and support to me. I feel real alone but guess I'm crazy enough to believe that love and community, working together to change a tired world

are possible goals. I'm an old unromantic socialist but the magazine made me think beyond my limited visions, made me laugh and cry. The first issue upset me -- probably because it's so hard for me to face and deal with how much and how often I hate men -- but this issue seemed to deal much more with what I think being gay is about -- It has nothing to do with my hate/love of men. It has to do with loving women, feeling their support and trust, realizing our creativity and strength and joy.

-- M.G., Colombia

A.H. introduced me to your magazine. I like your "Monogamy" statement and "'I' by Ramona Roark." It's the first thing I've enjoyed reading in over a year. Thank you for writing it. Best regards.

-- K.N., Bakersfield, California

I've just finished reading Volume 1 Issue 4 of LESBIAN VOICES. You are doing beautiful work!

-- Annie Juliet, New York

I received my first issue Sunday at the Lesbian-Feminist Alliance and was very impressed. It was a very well put together and all-together magazine for Lesbians. It was finally something I could read that didn't always put dirty slurs with mentions of Lesbianism.

-- Carolyn D. Shama, California

I really like what you're doing. May you have all the energy needed to move forward.

-- Tee Corinne, San Francisco, California

This is a quickly written fan letter. Your magazine gets better and better. I usually read each issue at a woman's store or at the Sacramento Women's Center. Your June 1975 issue was so well put together, with so many fine and timely writings that I took a spare dollar and bought myself a copy. Since I don't have much money to spare above essentials like food, this represents my true happiness at reading/participating in your work.

I can't afford a subscription, so I'll get my copies at the Sacramento Women's Center. But I know that publications cost a lot to produce, so I am enclosing a dollar cash as a donation.

Thank you, sisters.

And I'm sure that the spirit of Sappha, in her Aeolic dress/tunic and flowers, smiles somewhere, knowing that she now has more sisters than ever before.

-- Ann Forfreedom, Sacramento, California

[Editor's Note: Thank you for your donation, Ann, and I'm sorry I didn't get around to writing you a personal acknowledgement. We're glad you like our magazine. R.N.]

LESBIAN VOICES looks fine. Keep up the good work. Perseverance and patience is all.

-- Ellen Bissert, 13th Moon, New York

I would really enjoy seeing a copy of the magazine! Send it in a brown wrapper, would you? The woman next door enjoyed reading your last issue so much, I'm afraid if she got ahold of this one before me, I'd never get to see it.

-- Anon.

You have a nice magazine!

-- Leslie Powell, Long Beach, California

We received our first copy of LESBIAN VOICES (June issue), and we are delighted with the publication. Many of the articles had very personal meaning for us. We agreed wholeheartedly with Nikki Dark's separatist position, having come to the same conclusion in our own minds over the past two years. Your defense of monogamy was beautifully precise -- our sentiments exactly. And the experiences related in "'I' by Ramona Roark" echoed situations we have both encountered in the movement. All this makes us feel as if we already know you and like you very much indeed. . . May the eyes of the Great Goddess smile upon you and your endeavors.

-- Judith Trova, Ohio

LIBERTARIAN REPLIES:

[The following letter was received in response to my open letter to LIBERTARIAN REVIEW published in the September 1975 issue of LESBIAN VOICES. -- Rosalie Nichols]

Please note that I did not write the "editorial" on Women appearing in the May 1970 issue of the INDIVIDUALIST. James Davidson, then publisher of the INDIVIDUALIST, wrote it and inserted it in the magazine without my prior knowledge or permission.

I was furious with him when I first saw the editorial in the finished magazine since I was and am totally opposed to the sexist, stupid sentiments expressed therein and it was obvious that since he published it as an "editorial" I was going to be blamed for the contents. Davidson was apparently attempting to give his "editorial" "official" magazine endorsement without taking any responsibility for the consequences.

At the time I was in a difficult position, since Davidson, by prior agreement, had physical control over the production of the magazine. I demanded that he publish a full retraction in the next issue. Instead he made some vague allusions to his authorship in the next issue. At that point I severed my business relationship with Davidson, but the damage had already been done.

If you ever get to Washington DC please feel free to kick Davidson in the groin for me.

Sincerely yours,

Jarret B. Wollstein

ANNOUNCEMENT

Social Science 620. Ideology and Social Process. A course focussing on the ideologies of libertarianism, feminism and lesbianism as they apply to specific contemporary issues in modern society -- including such diverse topics as gun control, property rights, and victimless crime laws. Offered Spring Semester 1976 at San Francisco State University -- MWF 11:10 a.m. - 12 noon. For further information, contact Dr. Lois Flynne at HLL 383A or phone (415) 469-1448.

CIRCLE OF SUPPORT FOR JANE ALPERT

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We are women who support Jane Alpert and welcome her into the Feminist Movement.

In 1969 Jane Alpert was arrested for conspiring with others to blow up government property. After pleading guilty to a bombing conspiracy, she jumped bail and spent the next four years underground. During her years as a fugitive, Alpert discovered that she and other women revolutionaries suffered from hatred and discrimination against women in the male left. Her thinking evolved from the narrow ideology of Marxism to the larger, more vital concerns of feminism, a process which she made public in her open letter from the underground (Mother Right. Spring 1973). In November 1974, Jane Alpert turned herself in to the authorities, and is now serving a 27-month prison term.

There has been confusion and controversy surrounding these events. Jane Alpert has been accused by some people in the left of being an informer. She has been charged with revealing the whereabouts of other radicals in her writings from the underground, and in her conversations with authorities after surfacing -- particularly of leading to the arrest of Pat Swinton. But the fact is that in May 1975, it was disclosed in court papers filed by the government (United States District Court, Southern District of New York, 70 Cr. 230 (MP)) that Jane Alpert risks a prolonged prison sentence for perjury and contempt because she refused to give any information which might endanger Pat Swinton.

The male Right wants Jane Alpert in prison for breaking its laws and the male Left wants her discredited for smashing its idols. We recognize that both the patriarchal Right and Left are anti-feminist. We recognize the right of every woman to leave the Right, the Left, or any situation which oppresses her. Jane Alpert has been denied this right. We welcome into feminism all women who reject any form of male control.

We want to explore and forge a new feminist ethic and philosophy; we want the participation of women who seek to find what is honorable, moral, and just, according to a feminist frame of reference. Jane Alpert is not only a symbol of Feminist defiance, she is also a human being who needs, and has earned, our respect, our support and our strength. We call for the support of all women who can identify with the courage of Jane Alpert and who wish to clear the name of a woman who has chosen feminism over male ideologies.

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Barbara Mehrhof, Coordinator -- 316 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10001

---

5 October 1975

Dear Circle,

Thank you for your recent letter. I am enclosing a donation. Please add my name as a sponsor and keep me informed of the Circle's activities. I am happy to be in touch with a group of feminists who reject both the male left and the male right. I have long ago rejected both the Marxist left and the Fascist right, not because of feminism, but because I saw that both were Statist ideologies that would lead to dictatorship by one group or another in practice. It is probably no accident that these are male ideologies, however. May I hope that the feminist philosophy which you mention in your Statement of Purpose will be one of freedom for the individual? -- Rosalie Nichols.

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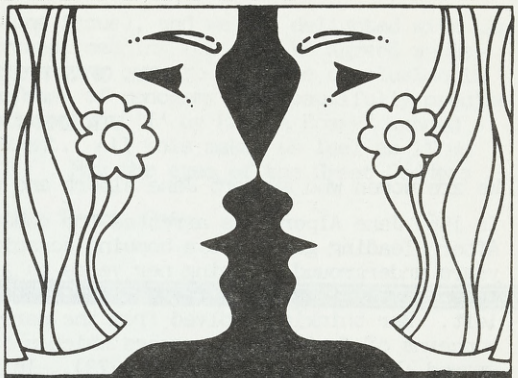

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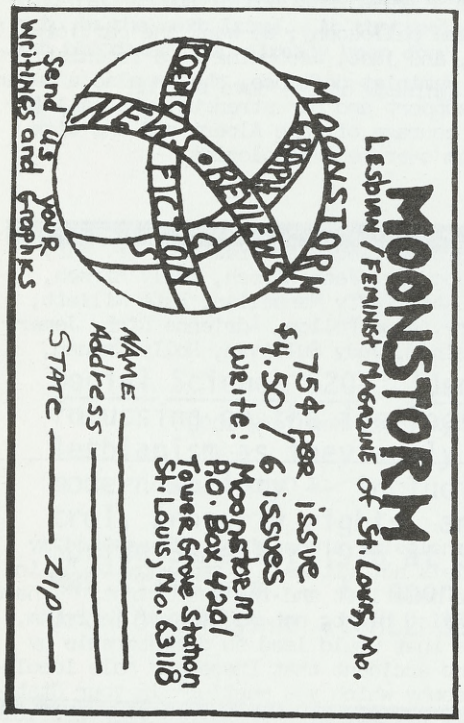

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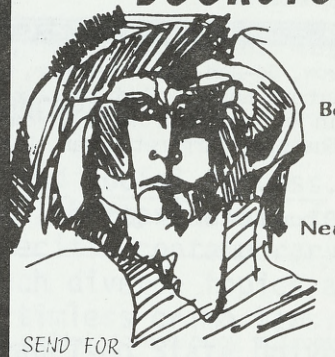

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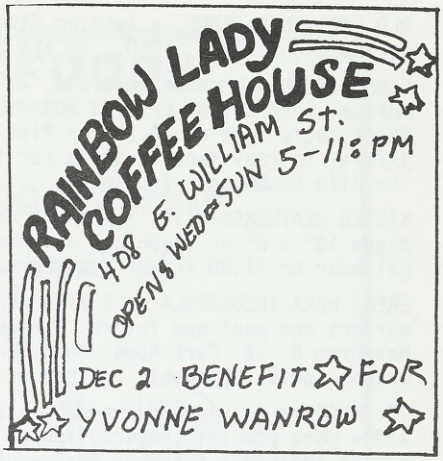

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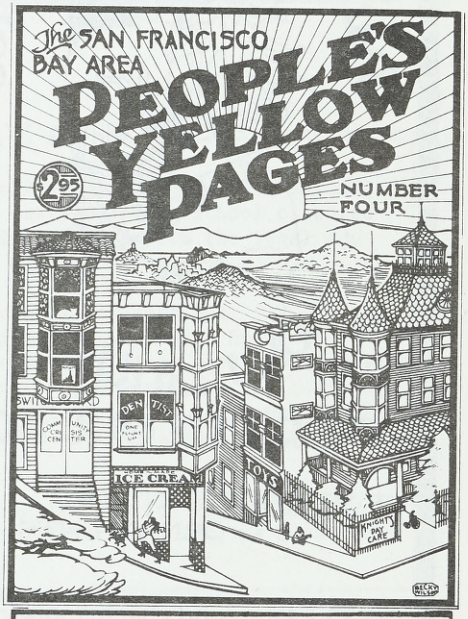

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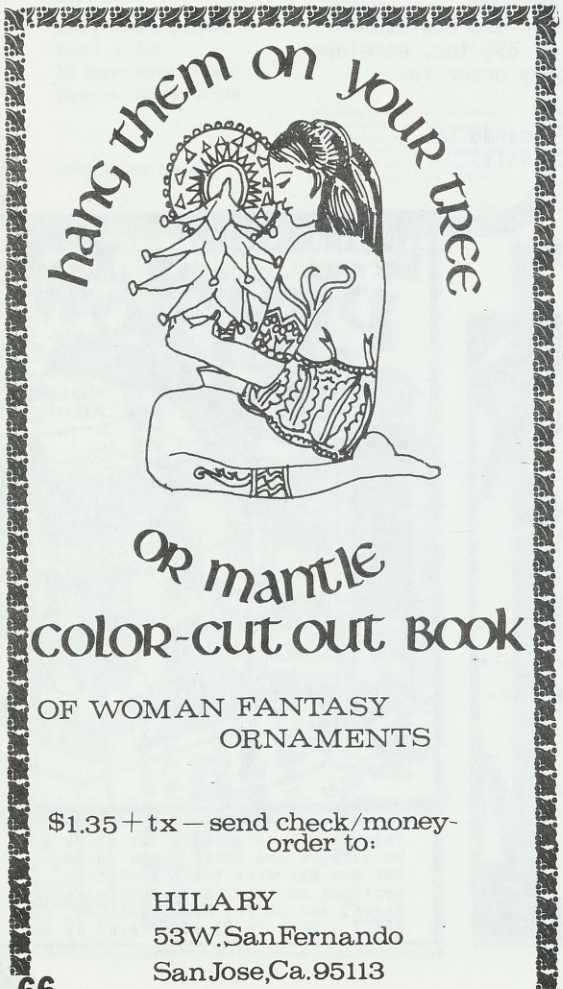

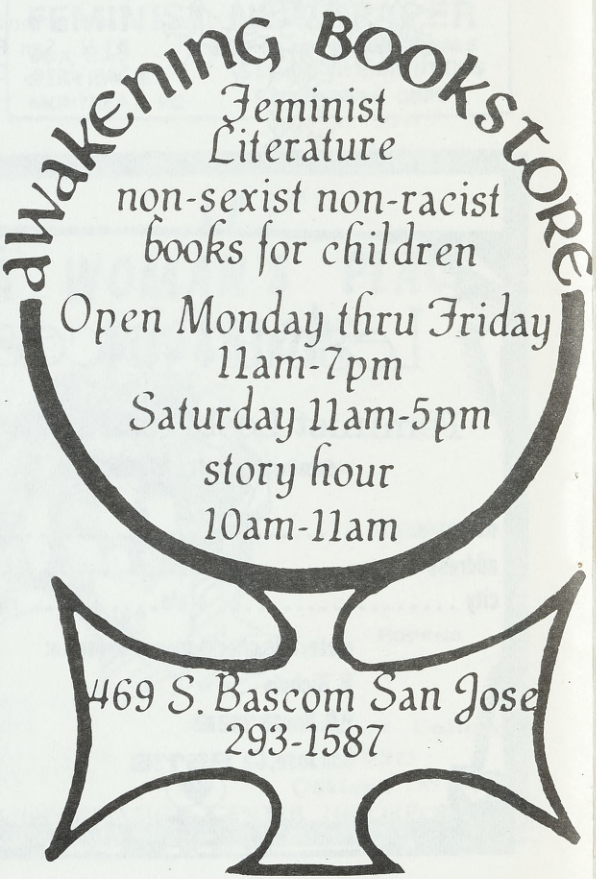

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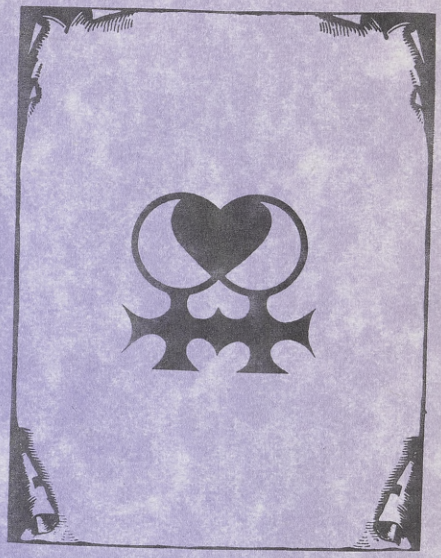

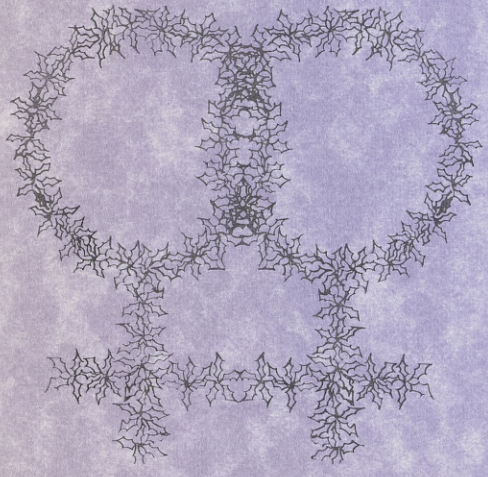

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